Governance Reforms and Human Security in Nigeria

By

Attahiru M. Jega, OFR
Department of political science
Bayero University, Kano

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1. Introduction

"Governance Reforms and Human Security" is an apt theme chosen for discussion at a meeting of the distinguished NNOM laureates gathered here today (along with the ordinary mortals invited to join you!). There are no better and appropriate thematic issues than these, deserving of serious attention and consideration by the crème *ala* crème of our intelligentsia in present day Nigeria. Daily life in general revolves around, and is affected by, governance or mis-governance, and security or insecurity, as citizens, individually and collectively strive to explore their God given potentials and as they struggle for the fulfillment of their fundamental needs and aspirations. Recognition of the role and impact of governance on citizens has led to constant effort in stable democracies for reforms to improve public sector governance and management and to facilitate, as well as nurture and entrench human security (Lynn 2014). Fragile democracies, such as Nigeria ought to be paying attention to this global trend, but somehow they don't. However, it is better to begin to address the challenges of governance and human security in Nigeria more concretely than ever before, before it is too

late. When we allow things to get so bad for so long, getting out of the quagmire is overwhelmingly difficult.

In this presentation, I pose and try to answer three (3) broad questions: Generally, what is governance about and how is it linked to human security? Specifically, what is the nature of governance in Nigeria and how is it linked to the issue of human insecurity? What types of governance reforms are required given the nature of governance in Nigeria presently and how can they be best brought about; or what specific recommendations can be made regarding governance reforms and human security in Nigeria?

But first, how are the two notions of governance and human security conceptualized?

2. Conceptualizing Governance and Human Security

Social science concepts are often ambiguous and defiant of precise definitions. The concept of governance and most especially the popularized notion of "good governance", are clear examples of opaqueness and ambiguity of such concepts. So is that of human security. I try to traverse and navigate this ambiguity in this section of the presentation, in order to subsequently, hopefully present a clear perspective and make the case for governance reforms and human security in Nigeria.

2.1 Governance: "good governance," "bad Governance" and all that...

In the context of the public sector in modern states, governance is about "steering" the course amidst "the changing boundaries between the public, private and voluntary actors, [which] may include a range of themes [such as] "the process of engagement (politics), the substantive issues (policy), and the institutional structures through which state and other actors relate to one another (polity)" (Hardiman, 2014: 228). Even in stable democracies, the complex interactions and associated outcomes, which governance represents, are in constant need of refinement and replenishment through reform measures. In unstable and transitional democracies, such as ours in Nigeria, governance requires constant attention and requisite reforms for it to deliver on the fundamental needs and aspirations of citizens, amongst which human security is paramount. Human security, broadly defined, is essentially about wellbeing and peace of mind of the entire citizens, without which, no nation can ever be at peace. Governance is therefore intricately linked to human security. Good democratic governance is the panacea for national socioeconomic growth and development and human security. Bad governance and mis-governance, on the contrary, obstruct democratic development, undermines economic growth and nurtures, as well as entrenches human insecurity.

Governance is often confused with government. But, as Heywood has noted, "'Governance' is a broader term than government", in the sense that it "... refers, in its widest sense, to the various ways through which social life is coordinated [in a given polity].

Government can therefore be seen as one of the organizations involved in governance..." (2015: 84). In this sense, government is the organizational platform of governance in the public sector, as "market" is the organizational platform of governance in the private/economic sphere, and "networks" are the organizational frameworks for governance in the civil society sector.

In the public sector, governance is a form of public management, which involves "rowing" (administration or service delivery), or more recently, "steering" (setting targets and strategic objectives) in addressing the welfare and wellbeing of citizens. In this context, to 'govern', "is to rule or exercise control [over] others" and to preside over and coordinate the traditional government organization, the bureaucracy, through 'top-down' authority systems (ibid. 85).

Governance in the context of a modern nation-state is first and foremost about providing for the fundamental needs and aspirations of citizens, through governmental institutions and processes, steered, driven and guided by chosen representatives of the people through competitive elections, which are free, fair and credible. Amongst what can be termed as the fundamental needs and aspirations of citizens in any country are: food, shelter, health, education, rights, wellbeing and human security, which is indeed paramount.

 In the crisis and adjustment period of the mid 1980s, the *Washington Consensus* served as the framework for the intervention activities of the World Bank and other international economic development institutions in the "economic development" of African countries, such

as Nigeria (World Bank 2000). It pushed for "massive deregulation of markets, tightening of public spending, guarantees for property rights and large scale privatizations" as the requisite conditions for economic growth and development (Rothstein 2014a: 144).

The notion of "good governance" evolved with the failure of SAPs to catalyze economic growth and development in the so-called developing countries, and seem to have replaced the Washington Consensus in the 1990s. Since the 1990s, scholars have attributed the failure of the Washington Consensus strategy to the lack of functional, or weakness of, institutions and have been preoccupied with the search for measures and mechanisms of reforming public institutions and making the delivery of public sector services to the public more transparent, accountable, efficient and cost-effective through reform processes. As Rothstein has noted, "since the late 1990s, economists and political scientists alike have started to argue that dysfunctional government institutions play a central part in many of the world's most pressing economic and social problems" 2014b: 5). Hence, panacea was seen as "good governance", which can remove distortions in the public sector and restore functionality of institutions. Thus, "good governance" became the framework within which to introduce market mechanisms into the public sector governance processes. Many conceptions of "good governance" abound, as summarized by Rothstein: from good governance as small government, to good governance as the absence of corruption, to good governance as the rule of law, good governance as democracy, to good governance as government efficiency, etc. (ibid. 2014a: 146-152).

In advancing the case of good governance, many other concepts are also bandied about; such notions as "devolved governance" related to organization of public administration; "delegated governance", in regulatory policy; and new issues were introduced to "fiscal governance" (Hardiman 2014:236). In particular, under the framework of "good governance", African countries were guided to "bring managerialism into the public bureaucracy" and introduce "public management reforms" which have the objectives "of increasing efficiency, cutting costs, and helping the public sector to deliver high-quality service" (Pierre 2014: 188 &190).

In any case, good governance came to mean the absence of bad governance. Characteristics of "bad governance" are identified as: lack of accountability and transparency, interference with the rule of law and corruption. Indeed, bad governance is perceived as the inability of public institutions to manage public affairs and public resources; and the failure of a government to meet the needs of society while making the best use of all the resources at their disposal.

Ironically the World Bank's conception of "good governance" is applicable within the contexts of both democratic governments and authoritarian regimes, with profound contradictions being evident. Cutting costs, "rolling back" the state, efficiency, institutional capacity building, were pursued vigorously at the expense of inclusivity, participatory processes, bottom up approaches and to some extent,

even transparency and accountability. Thus, good governance is stripped off its normative democratic content.

Perhaps a more useful concept would be that which qualifies governance, such as a notion of "good democratic governance". In a transitional democracy, such as Nigeria's, whatever else governance could be, it must include a democratic content: it must be participatory, with bottom-up processes and it must have inclusivity.

2.2 Conceptualizing human security

Human security is a fundamental right, it is at the core of survival and wellbeing and it is intricately linked with governance of a polity. As Kofi Annan has stated, "Human security can no longer be understood in purely military terms. Rather, it must encompass economic development, social justice, environmental protection, democratization, disarmament, and respect for human rights and the rule of law" (2001).

According to Kofi Annan,

> Human security in its broadest sense, embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment -- these are the interrelated building

blocks of human – and therefore national – security. (2000, p. 4)

Thus, human security is an all-encompassing concept, at the core of governance and development of any nation-state. Indeed, the Commission on Human Security (CHS) has offered the following broad definition of human security as follows:

> Human Security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood, and dignity (2003: 4; in UN Trust Fund 2009: 5).

Five main features of Human Security have been identified as: people-centred, multi-sectorial, comprehensive' context-specific and prevention-oriented. The range of the types of human security and the main threats to them, are summarized in the table below:

Type of Security	Examples of main threats
Economic Security	Persistent poverty; unemployment
Food Security	Hunger; Famine
Health Security	Deadly infectious diseases; Malnutrition; lack of access to basic health care
Environmental Security	Environmental degradation; resources depletion; natural disasters; pollution
Personal Security	Physical violence; crime; terrorism; Domestic violence; child labor
Community Security	Inter-ethnic, religious and other identity based tensions
Political Security	Political repression; human rights abuses; exclusion

(Adapted from UN Trust Fund 2009: 6)

From the way and manner by which governance and human security are conceptualized, as reviewed in the preceding discussion, it is clear that they are intricately linked and are critical to human and national development, and therefore are deserving of attention and constant striving for reform processes to address challenges relating to them. The discussion that follows is within the context of the conceptual and definitional frameworks as reviewed in this section.

3. Challenges of Governance in Nigeria

As regrettable and embarrassing as it is, Nigeria has for long been facing both acute governance and human security challenges. It is regrettable and embarrassing because the nature, extent and magnitude of the challenges defy logic and rationality. Nigeria has such potential, in human and material resources, that with good, democratic governance, it should not be facing such humongous human security challenges. But, Nigeria is characterized by acute poor / bad governance, such that the potentials have been undermined and the human security situation has deteriorated and become more complex. These challenges are intricately connected and they each feed into the other. The bigger challenge, however, is how to disentangle them, each in its various strands and address them decisively and effectively.

There are many issues and challenges of governance in Nigeria, some of which have been very well defined and articulated, and more recently, succinctly, by our respected senior colleague in the academia, Akin Mabogunje ("Nigeria: Issues and Challenges of Governance in Nigeria", March 10, 2016). What has not been as

adequately highlighted and documented, as the challenges of governance have been, is the nexus between governance and human security in Nigeria or indeed the nexus between governance reforms and human security.

A summary of the governance issues and challenges will suffice, to be followed by an articulation of the nexus between governance, especially good, democratic governance and human security.

At the outset, it is important to recognize, as Akin Mabogunje has recently rightly done, that Nigeria has been "transformed away from its federal and democratic trajectory" of development by a governance framework nurtured and engendered under a long period of military rule, which has been bequeathed as a legacy of military rule to the Fourth Republic. A corner stone legacy of military rule is what he calls "the rise and fall of the "Awuff" (i.e. Pidgin: 'free money' or 'unearned income…spent imprudently') society. This is a society characterized by rent-seeking from oil revenues, profligacy, kleptocracy, dysfunctional public sector, distorted federal structure, convoluted "centrist" 'federal' arrangement, and significantly, also a dysfunctional and most expensive governance system at all levels in the country: federal, state and local. The "Awuff" mindset led to incessant salary reviews, spiraling creation of states and local governments, centralization and commandeering of fiscal revenues by the federal government, and massive, mind-boggling corruption. As he observed:

> Since the resources being shared [are] largely not the product
> of the tax revenue from the labour of the citizens, there was no

compunction or moral restraint in misappropriating or stealing significant part of it. Consequently, State Governments had no compunction in misappropriating the share of the Federation Account meant for the local government, which in turn, had no compunction misappropriating part of the share that was eventually allowed to reach them into personal use. And since the misappropriated share did not come from the taxes, which the citizens were no longer compelled or encouraged to pay, they too became compliant with the situation.

This is the core challenge of the convoluted nature of our current federal arrangement and dysfunctional governance system; as well as the substantive underpinning of the agitation for restructuring of the federation.

Professor Akin Mabogunje concluded, rightly, that, unless we revisit these dysfunctional legacies and rectify them "the nation will continue to be hostage to a dysfunctional and disempowering governance system in the country."

As many scholars have similarly observed, "Nigeria is heavily affected by the so-called resource curse, rent-seeking and elite capture of the state" (Amudsen, 2010). For example, it has been shown that in spite of over USD 400bn oil income since 1960, Nigeria has not got much to show, other than poor economic development, skewed distribution of wealth, acute mass poverty and all-pervasive corruption at all levels of government (ibid.) Chinua Achebe in the late 1980s, for example, attributed the governance and development

challenges in Nigeria to failure of leadership, which he sees as "the trouble with Nigeria" (2000). This failure, according to Achebe, has occasioned, as well as, entrenched inherent, problems such as 'tribalism', social injustice and the cult of mediocrity, indiscipline, lack of patriotism and corruption. With good leaders, Achebe believed that Nigeria could reposition its governance processes and surmount all the challenges.

It can be affirmed that poor leadership begets bad governance. As 'leaders' come into their positions to steer governance processes with limited experience or generally unprepared, which they virtually do nothing to mitigate, they hardly comprehend the enormity of the responsibilities, duties and obligations, which they have assumed and they discharge them, if at all, incompetently. In the worst-case scenarios, they only pay attention to recouping with profits what they "invested" to get to the position.

Bad governance has, consequently eroded professional and ethical standards in public sector governance, by ignoring checks and balances, by undermining due process and the rule of law, and by exclusion and restricting the spaces for democratic participation in the decision and policy making processes. Additionally, it has arrested Nigeria's development potentials, restricted potential investments into the political economy and undermined government's authority and legitimacy.

4. Human Insecurity in Nigeria

Above all, one of the major challenges, occasioned by a combination of poor leadership and bad governance is heightened insecurity rather than nurtured human security in Nigeria. Physical security in terms of safety of lives and property has deteriorated, evidenced by the increasing spates of communal, herder-farmer, and ethno-religious, conflicts; incidences of armed banditry and robbery as well as, kidnappings, which are committed with impunity; and increasing cases of mass displacement of people, either by insurgency, militancy or by natural disasters, such as flooding and desertification. This has been complicated and compounded by the evident failure of risk management capacity of the state in the face of human and natural disasters.

Some of the most potent human security challenges, which bedevil Africa, find acute expressions in Nigeria. These include: corruption, proliferation of small arms and light weapons; hunger famine and food insecurity; internal displacement; forced labor; women insecurity; and environmental insecurity (Abass 2010).

In addition to threats to physical security, wellbeing is acutely threatened by rising unemployment and poverty; and the failures of education, health, and environmental and other policies to have substantial meaningful impact on the lives and living conditions of the people.

Nigeria is one of the countries mapped in red color, in the UN Human Security Index, suggestive of the extent of threats to, and the

precarious nature of, human security issues in the country (HSI 2010). This not just because of militancy in the Niger Delta areas and insurgency in the North eastern Nigeria, but because of the combined threats to all dimensions of human security in the country, covering economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. Given this, it is worth stating that Nigeria can never be at peace unless people have security in their daily lives, to paraphrase a statement in the 1999 Human Development Report (Dorn 2017). Citizens can, and should, get security not by self-help, but essentially by the governance process and public institution sectors developing the capacity, competence and effectiveness to deliver services, which address the fundamental needs and aspirations of citizens, as well as provide protection for lives and properties within a framework of mutually respectful peaceful coexistence.

5. Towards Reforming Governance for Human Security

The governance challenges in Nigeria are by any measure or standard enormous and consequential both for the 'governors' and the 'governed'. Their extent and magnitude, as lighted in the previous section, makes clear the need and the desirability of urgent reforms.

To be sure, there have been numerous previous efforts at governance reforms. Since the 1980s, these have been embedded within the framework of the Washington Consensus and the IMF / World Bank's opaque and shifting frameworks, and they have been accompanied by repeated failures to engender lasting solutions. In any case, whatever we may have done or attempted to do in the past with

regards to governance reforms has clearly been inadequate and ineffective in addressing all the issues and challenges. We need to do more and urgently, with greater seriousness, determination and patriotic commitment.

The need for governance for human security reforms assumes greater urgency if we consider the enormous backlash on human security, or more appropriately, the heightened human insecurity, which is occasioned by poor or bad governance, especially in a religiously and ethnically diverse and conflict ridden polity, such as Nigeria. No doubt, bad governance engenders poverty, erodes trust necessary for mutual coexistence in a diverse setting, and undermines Nigeria's existence as a corporate entity.

6. Recommendations

Nigeria is in dire need of governance reforms. Governmental structures and institutions have become weaker, and have swung from extreme rigidity (of blind use of the colonial General Orders and Financial Instructions) to the other extreme of unregulated or poorly regulated flexibility, infused with impunity. A balance needs to be struck. Reforms are required in order to reposition government, improve its quality and enable it to satisfy the fundamental needs and aspirations of citizens, paramount amongst which is human security. Reforms are required to cover all the four fundamental aspects of governance, namely: structure, institutions, Agents/actors and attitudes/behaviors. If only Nigeria could begin the governance reform processes with the urgency, as well as the serious commitment that it deserves, we can in a reasonably short time

deescalate tension in the polity and begin to strengthen the foundation of good democratic governance for human security.

. Only such a comprehensive undertaking could imbue government with not only requisite and desirable or acceptable flexibility but also innovativeness to enhance capacity to deliver high-quality services cost effectively, efficiently and transparently.

When things have been so bad for so long, it takes a while to find and institutionalize lasting solutions. We can only make haste slowly but we must make haste! The journey of a thousand miles, as the Chinese have said, begins with a single step; but it has to be a decisive step, an irreversible one marching forward ever and backward never!

Accordingly, the following reform measures are recommended to nurture and expand the scope of good democratic governance and human security in Nigeria:

6.1 Structural Reforms

- Reform the Federal system, with an agenda divided into Short-, medium- and long-term.

  Short-term: before 2019: devolve some powers and responsibilities, and commensurate resources, from the federal to the state governments

  Medium-term: 2019-2024: Devolve more powers from the federal to the state governments, with a revised vertical and horizontal

formulas for revenue allocation and substantial increase in the derivation principle, with some elements of resource control.

Long term: Beyond 2024: Do a fundamental review of the federal arrangement and the short and medium term reforms and do a final restructuring, with more powers and resources to the state, with a compact, if not small federal government and a revolutionized revenue generation and allocation system.

6.2 Institutional Reforms

- Reform the Police in particular and the broader national security architecture in general. Pay more attention to national, i.e. people/citizen/communities security than to regime or government functionaries' security. Reforming the police should be short-to medium-term, and reforming the general security architecture should be medium- to long-term.

- Accelerate Electoral reforms, to engender electoral integrity, which in a democracy is the cornerstone of good governance and the quality of government. Short-term, review the Electoral Act and improve upon its democratic content and efficacy, and conclude it at least six months before the 2019 elections (Jega 2016; 2017a and 2017b)

- Review and improve upon the structures and mechanisms of entrenching transparency and accountability in governance, especially in strengthening and empowering the anti-corruption

agencies, the whistle blower policies, and the judiciary for speedy and impartial adjudication roles

- Review, strengthen and empower the bureaucratic and technocratic institutions of the state for effective regulation, policy decision making and efficient service delivery

6.3 Reforming the Agents/Actors

- Review/introduce and enforce codes of ethnical conduct for public officials (in the executive and the legislatures), as well as for bureaucrats and technocrats.

- Review/introduce and enforce codes of professional ethical conduct for all professional groups who interface with market, policy and politics in the polity.

6.4 Attitudinal Reforms

- Ways and means have to be found and institutionalized to change attitudes of Nigerians in the direction of accepting, imbibing and projecting a Nigerian national identity rather than seeking or taking refuge in the multiplicity of primordial identities.

- Institutions, such as NOA need to be reviewed, restructured, reorganized and empowered to drive programs and projects in this regard. The NYSC also has to be repositioned for better performance in the national integration and unity promotion agendas of the federal government.

Conclusion

If only Nigeria could begin the governance reform processes with the urgency, as well as the serious commitment that it deserves, we can in a reasonably short time deescalate tension in the polity and begin to strengthen the foundation of good democratic governance for human security. With this in mind, I call upon all, especially our leading intelligentsia to collectively work together with our politicians/elected public officials for a dispassionate governance reforms agenda that can address the identified pervasive challenges bedeviling Nigeria in all their structural, institutional and other ramifications. This is no doubt a task that can and must be done, as soon as is possible, and the sooner the better for the long suffering citizens of Nigeria and for our country's democratic development, within the framework of good democratic governance and the entrenchment of human security for all.

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