

GOOD GOVERNANCE TRANSPARENCY AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the essence of good governance in government and the entrenchment of democracy in the Fourth Republic. A corollary of good governance transparency in elections and choosing of representatives in the democratic systems. The paper examines the electoral systems in Nigeria's fourth republic vis-à-vis the practice of democracy and proposes that for national purposes, good governance and transparency are essential ingredients for entrenchment of democracy in Nigeria.

Keywords: Good Governance, Transparency, Development, Fourth Republic.

INTRODUCTION

Among the issues plaguing Nigeria's practice of democracy are good governance, transparency and national development (Yimenu, 2024; Omoigberale, 2025). Democracy is a system of government which is based on the mandate of the people through elections of representatives (Weingast, 2025). They represent the people's interest by allocating resources to meet the needs (Ahmed & Yashe, 2022). Democracy also determines the process through which such representatives are chosen to be made accountable to the general will of the electorate (Kong, 2025). Transparency requires that the electoral systems should be free and fair to ensure good governance for a modicum of development to take place (Esiere et al., 2024). This paper examines these processes in the Fourth republic and highlights the barriers that have prevented development from taking place in our polity in the Fourth Republic (Omoigberale, 2025).

This paper makes the point that for development to take place in the republic, the electoral process must be transparent, to confer legitimacy on government (Yimenu, 2024). The concept of good governance, electoral transparency and national development are explained in this paper (Manjo, 2024). The paper recommends that good governance is corollary of transparency and essential ingredients for national development in Nigeria (Esiere et al., 2024).

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The Concept of Good Governance

Good governance is the manner in which power is utilized in the management of a country's economic and social resources (World Bank, quoted in democracy Monitor; Adebayo, 2020). According to Ajene (2003) good governance implies (Eteudo & Ufomba, 2022):

- The promotion of the interests of the people (Yimenu, 2024)
- The accommodation and tolerance of the minority and discordant groups (Körtvélyesi, 2022)
- Strict adherence to the rule law at all levels (Ojo, 2019)
- The practice of accountability and transparency in leadership (Omodero, 2020)

The Nigerian political system has been found very much wanting in the promotion of good governance especially in the Fourth Republic during the tenure of Olusegun Obasanjo (Omoigberale, 2025).

Good governance can be seen as the process of making and interpreting decisions (Manjo, 2024). It deals with the role of government (Ahmed & Yashe, 2022). Governance is the exercise of political authority and the use of institutional resources to manage

society's problems and affairs (Weingast, 2025). It is the use of institutions and structures of authority to control or coordinate activities in the society, according to Kirkpatrick (1989) governance is "Governance Control, Direction and Behavior" (Issaev & Zakharov, 2024).

Good governance is the major objectives of democracy for any society to witness good governance; certain elements must be put in place (Esiere et al., 2024). They include rule of law, participation, transparency, consensual orientation responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency, equity and accountability (Offorma, 2009; Yimenu, 2024). Good governance is essential for development of society (Omodero, 2020). The good objectives can be achieved in a truly democratic society (Weingast, 2025).

The Concept of Transparency

Transparency implies evident, obvious and easily understood process, frank and easily detected processes (Sykes, 2003; Esiere et al., 2024). Electoral transparency has to do with the fact that the institutionalized procedure for choosing office holders (Representatives) by some or all of the recognized members of a society is seen to be performed in terms of its main attributes of freeness and fairness (Olaitan, 2004; Yimenu, 2024). Since electoral process has to do with the mode of coming to and changing power, we posit that only transparent and credible process can produce legitimate government that reflects good governance which aims at the overall societal development (Omoigberale, 2025). Good governance is a function of predictable, open and enlightened process capable of bringing about a sustaining economic, societal development and institutional growth, among other things (World Bank, 2002; Omodero, 2020).

According to Law (2003) an election could be said to be free and fair when it is conducted under a peaceful and orderly environment (Esiere et al., 2024). When there is total absence from any kind of electoral malpractice such as rigging, manipulation of results, violence and all the stakeholders and participants have equal opportunity and uniform condition (Yimenu, 2024).

Transparent electoral process is a reflection of the free atmosphere in which voters casts their votes and the reasonableness of election results as declared acceptable by reasons of the transparency which the process followed (Omoigberale, 2025).

A transparent electoral system involves (Esiere et al., 2024):

- (a) Disqualification, of unfit persons (Yimenu, 2024)
- (b) Adequate security of voters against intimidation (Omoigberale, 2025)
- (c) Secrecy of votes (Weingast, 2025)
- (d) The electoral body must be competent, non-partisan and corrupt free (Esiere et al., 2024)
- (e) The country must have delimited constituencies (Issaev & Zakharov, 2024)
- (f) Registration of Voters (Yimenu, 2024)
- (g) Announcement of election results promptly (Omoigberale, 2025)

Electoral transparency is germane to a peaceful and acceptable enthronement of democracy (Yimenu, 2024).

Political holders who are expected to hold office are expected to accomplish national development (Omodero,2020). However the scenario in the fourth republic elections in Nigeria have shown that electoral transparency under Olusegun Obasanjo regime in the fourth Republic was faulty and violent ridden, it lacked transparency through massive rigging, electoral and fraud myriad of electoral malpractices devoid of transparency (Omoigberale, 2025). The electoral process in the Fourth Republic under Olusegun Obasanjo was full of incompetence and deliberate bungling by the INEC operators, widespread use of thugs and security agents against voters and flagrant abuse of power of incumbency (Nigeria Compass, Jan 5,2009; Esiere et al., 2024).

The Concept of National Development

Development is a multidimensional process which involves the changes in social structure, political attitudes and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty (Lane and Grasson 1997; Omodero, 2020). Development according to Sen (1990) is the same as "Capacity for expansion and Freedom (Yimenu, 2024). Development requires adequate empowerment of state and society such that they can adequately discharge their complementary responsibilities (Weingast, 2025). It requires also enhanced state capacity as well as the restitution and governmental stability (Issaev & Zakharov, 2024). The term has also been explained to mean qualitative and quantitative improvement, advancement and progress towards attainment of social, political and economic aspiration (Adesholekuu, 2004; Manjo, 2024).

Oladokun (2003) sees development as an all-encompassing effort which has as focus radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures, as well as in popular attitude, customs, beliefs and political culture (Omoigberale, 2025). National development encompasses economic, social and political development as it affects a nation's life (Yimenu, 2024). Writers opine that political maturity is a catalyst of the level of development that could be witnessed in other areas of a nation's life (Weingast, 2025). Political office holders are expected to authoritatively allocate resources in a way which bring about the much expected development in every sphere of a nation's life (Omodero, 2020).

The Fourth Republic

The Fourth Republic was brought into being by General Abdusalami Abubakar who initiated the transition which brought into being in 1999, May 29 with the election of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as President, who served two terms of 8 years (Ahmed & Yashe, 2022; Yimenu, 2024). Umaru Musa Yar Adun was elected on 21 April, 2007 (Omoigberale, 2025). Good Luck Jonathan became the third President of the Fourth Republic on 6 May, 2010 following the demise of Umaru Musa Yar Adun on 5th May 2010 (Kong, 2025).

Transparency and Accountability in Nigeria

Lack of Transparency and accountability, which are crucial tools for good governance, breed corruption (Omodero, 2020; Esierie et al., 2024). The Nigeria political system has been riddled by a high spasm of corruption in the political system, no doubt Transparency International rated Nigeria as the third most corrupt nation in the world (Omoigberale, 2025). This is a proof of our failure to address this issue appropriately in the past (Yimenu, 2024). Successive governments made sure attempts to fight corruption policy while pretending that corruption in high places has been checked (Esierie et al., 2024). Good strategies were put in place to check accountability, but manipulated by the powers that be (Omoigberale, 2025). The attainment of transparent and accountable government calls for an approach to good governance (Adebayo, 2020). Emphasis must be laid on due process and the rule of law in the realization of transparency and accountability in the government of both human and material resources (Ojo, 2019).

Credible Electoral Process

The Nigeria electoral process was not credible for the past eight years 1999-2007, the process of election lacked sanity (Omoigberale, 2025). The integrity of the electoral process in the last eight years was punctured by questions of irregularities and poor conduct, thus casting aspersions on the democratic process, electoral procedures and good governance (Yimenu, 2024). The Electoral Reform Panel was instituted by the Federal Government in the Fourth republic to address the electoral process the country (Esierie et al., 2024). There was hope that the laws of the 2007

elections would be addressed and corrected to bring credibility to the Nigerian democratic process (Omodero, 2020).

Rule of Law

A condition for good governance prevail the rule of law, Lawless societies breed chaos and instability leading to decay in the country (Adebayo, 2020; Weingast, 2025). The government must uphold the rule of law to show discipline and regard for order mal procedure (Ojo, 2019). No Man should be above the law and public officers should not disregard the laws because of immunity of officers (Yimenu, 2024). They still face the law when they stop out of office (Kong, 2025). Human and civil rights should not be taken for granted under a democratic process (Körtvélyesi, 2022).

Consensus Building

One of the characteristics of democracy in popular participation (Yimenu, 2024). There is the need t carry the citizenry along in the evolution and implementation of policies, especially those that have direct bearing of their lives (Omoigberale, 2025). Good governance includes the ability to build consensus and capacity to accommodate people opinions (Esiere et al., 2024). The success of any government depends on the extent to which it recognizes and respects various shades of opinion (Weingast, 2025). The media is a good means of engaging this policy strategy (Omodero, 2020). Civil society groups are needed as partners to ensure good governance and the democratic process (Yimenu, 2024). The groups become a linkage between government and the people (Omoigberale, 2025). A healthy, cordial relationship between the two groups will build a stranger foundation of democracy, ant good governance in the country (Esiere et al., 2024).

Relationship between the Executive and Legislative Arms

Good governance entails cordial relationship between the executive and legislative arms of government for the well being of development of the nation (Ahmed & Yashe, 2022). There should be a healthy. peaceful and cordial relationship between the two so as to build a stronger foundation of democracy and good governance in the country (Issaev & Zakharov, 2024). The move to amend the 1999 constitution due to perceived lapses identifies, is a step in the right direction (Omoigberale, 2025). The legislature must possess high moral standards in the discharge of their functions (Yimenu, 2024). This will in turn pot a check on the executive arm of government (Weingast, 2025). The cooperation between the executive and the legislative arms of government would ensure that the wheels of government more on smoothly without hindrance (Adebayo, 2020).

Perceived Flaws in Accountability and Transparency in the Fourth Republic

The 2007 elections were flawed as far as transparency was concerned (Omoigberale, 2025). The nature of political instability occasioned by the lack of transparency made people to disbelieve me enthronement of democracy on in Nigeria was credible (Yimenu, 2024). Under the 2007 elections, seven governors lost their mandates in the electoral tribunals by the intervention of the judiciary in the various election petitions and appeals thrown up by the results of the elections (The Nation, Feb 1 2009; Nigerian Tribune, 24 Feb 2009; Esiere et al., 2024). The implication of all these is that government failed to concentrate on the art of good governance and diverted good resources to personal aggrandizement instead of developmental projects (Omodero, 2020). Governments were engaged in legal tussles for more than half their tenure due to the problems of legitimacy (Omoigberale, 2025). The rest of their tenure was given to primitive accumulation and patronage serving (Yimenu, 2024). Those incumbent governments in the Fourth Republic failed to initiate and implement developmental projects but lost then touch for plans that could improve the welfare of citizens and enhance national development (Esiere et al., 2024).

Legitimacy was purchased through corrupt and fraudulent electoral processes, much to the chagrin of most Nigerians in the Fourth Republic under the democratic dispensation after 2007 (Omoigberale, 2025). At the state level, economic resources were channeled to the development of personalities who could help maintain stolen mandates through car gifts, unmerited appointments, award of arbitrary contract at the expense of national development (Yimenu, 2024). Governments which did settle down for the task of good governance, due to electoral transparency and legitimacy initiated and implemented developmental projects in the area of transportation peoples empowerment and social infrastructures (Babatope and Oladipop 2010; Omodero, 2020).

It is our belief that if political actors had good and transparent electoral mandates, they would enjoy legitimacy that enhance good governance, and can contribute their quotas in terms of development to the nation to ensure overall national development (Esiere et al., 2024). If the status however, remains unchanged, good governance would be crippled and bastardized by corrupt and inefficient policies of government office holders, and national development would be jeopardized (Omoigberale, 2025).

With particular reference to the 2007 elections, many of the emerging governors lacked political legitimacy because of electoral malpractices (Mohammed, 2009; Yimenu, 2024). It is not surprising that the civil societies, organizations, local and international observers and foreign based journalists who monitored and covered the elections concluded that the elections were fraudulent and flawed (The Guardian, 24 April; Tell, 7 April 2007; Esiere et al., 2024). Subsequently, for good governance and transparency to exist in Nigeria, everyone including the politicians, voters, candidates, the Electoral body, the incumbent political office holders and observers, must play the political game according to the rules (Weingast, 2025).

The 2012 Edo State Elections

Transparency and accountability was displayed on the recently concluded Edo State Elections which returned the incumbent Governor Adams Aliu Oshiomhole to power (Omoigberale, 2025). The election had all the traces of transparency and accountability from the onset (Yimenu, 2024). From political debates organized for the opposing groups, there was fairness and equal level ground for all parties (Esiere et al., 2024). The election was well organized but for a few hiccups, arising from using names on the electoral registers, adequate security at polling centers (Omodero, 2020). All malpractices were nibbled in the bud (Omoigberale, 2025). Voters freely expressed their franchise and results were declared within twenty four hours of the end of elections (Yimenu, 2024). There was no violence, no political intimidation and no rigging (Esiere et al., 2024). Everybody seemed to have accepted the results of the elections to date (Weingast, 2025). No petitions have been filed (Omoigberale, 2025). This is a pointer that Nigeria can improve its electoral process as democracy is entrenched to the body politic of the nation (Yimenu, 2024). Good governance has been demonstrated by the Oshiomhole government in Edo State, due to good performance, can be replicated elsewhere in Nigeria body politics (Omodero, 2020).

CONCLUSION

We have presented the concepts of good governance, transparency and accountability (Esiere et al., 2024). We have asserted that responsive government has the interest of the led at heart formulates politics and provide the enabling environment for empowerment and effective implementation policies (Yimenu, 2024). The political class can be motivated by ethical standards and moral practices for the welfare of all Nigerian (Omoigberale, 2025). Public office holders should recognize that they must serve and not to amass wealth or engage in personal aggrandizement (Adebayo, 2020). Good governance a possibility has been deeply demonstrated by the Adams Aliu Oshiomhole government in Edo State of Nigeria following the transparent elections that was held (Omodero, 2020).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There must be due procedure of legitimacy in government (Yimenu, 2024).
2. Good governance must ensure the attainment of development (Omodero, 2020).
3. An illegitimate Government cannot initiate or promote meaningful development (Esiere et al., 2024).
4. A transparent electoral process can guarantee procedural legitimacy for national development (Omoigberale, 2025).
5. The burden of legitimacy should be borne by political leaders in Nigeria so as to ensure national development (Yimenu, 2024).
6. The electoral process should be transparent and the political class must obey the rule of law and due process in management of national affairs (Ojo, 2019).
7. Leaders must be made transparent to all stakeholders (Esiere et al., 2024).
8. There must be continual changes in existing electoral procedures, reallocation of election functions or creation of new institutions (Tell, Jan 26, 2009; Weingast, 2025).

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