

**REVAMPING NIGERIA FROM THE SHACKLES OF BAD GOVERNANCE  
(BEFORE AND AFTER INDEPENDENCE)**

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**BENIN CITY**

**NOVEMBER, 2025**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,  
BENIN CITY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
AWARD OF THE BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A) HONOURS DEGREE IN  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES AND DIPLOMACY.**

**NOVEMBER, 2025**

**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this research project was carried out **OGAN FAVOUROMOLEGHO** in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, under my supervision.

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**(Head of Department)**

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

This project work is dedicated to the Almighty God for his infinite mercies and grace.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

My unreserved thankfulness goes to the Lord God Almighty for the enablement to finish strong.

I am deeply thankful to my supervisor, Mr. Daniel Orobator whose guidance, brilliance, and patience shaped this research. I remain truly grateful.

I extend my appreciation to the Head of Department Prof. J. C. Nwaka as well as other lecturers in the department who have contributed in no small measure to my academic growth, among whom are Prof. E.A. Ifidon, Prof. Benson Osadolor, Prof. J.I. Osagie Prof. Eddy Erghagbe. Dr. Frank Ikponmwosa, Dr. Charles, Dr. Daniel Olisa Iweze, Dr. Albert, Dr. A.O. Nwaokocha, Mr. Victor Aigobarueghian, Mrs. L. O. Enadeghe, and Mr. Ekhaton – Obogie Osaisonor Godfrey. May God bless you all greatly. Thank you all for your impact.

To my siblings Victor, Vera, and Vincent. Your love, laughter, and motivation kept me going even on the toughest days.

To my dear aunties, Aunty Biodun and Aunty Ruth, thank you for always inspiring me, and showing me what true family support looks like.

And finally, to myself. For the resilience, late nights, discipline, and determination it took to get here. For pushing through every doubt and choosing growth over comfort.

This work is for all of us. Your love, wisdom, and support — and my own strength — built the foundation behind these pages.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the persistent challenge of bad governance in Nigeria, tracing its roots from the colonial era through the post-independence period. It argues that many of the structural weaknesses evident in governance today such as corruption, weak institutions, and lack of accountability have historical foundations in colonial administrative practices that prioritized exploitation over development. Following independence in 1960, successive governments struggled to dismantle these inherited systems, often perpetuating inefficiency, political instability, and elite dominance. The study critically analyzes both pre- and post-independence governance frameworks, highlighting key failures while also identifying moments of reform and resilience. It further explores the socio-economic consequences of bad governance, including poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment. In response, the study proposes a framework for revamping governance in Nigeria through institutional strengthening, ethical leadership, citizen participation, and policy reforms aimed at transparency and sustainable development. Ultimately, it concludes that overcoming the legacy of bad governance requires a deliberate break from past practices and a commitment to inclusive and accountable governance systems.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Background to the study**

Nigeria's enduring governance crisis makes it one of the most complex postcolonial states in Africa. More than six decades after independence, the country still struggles with weak institutions, systemic corruption, elite domination, and social fragmentation. These challenges are not accidental; they are rooted in colonial statecraft, which emphasized control and resource extraction rather than democratic participation and inclusive development.<sup>1</sup> The 1914 amalgamation brought together diverse regions without internal consensus, creating a fragile foundation that later governments adapted rather than reformed.<sup>2</sup>

The persistence of policy inconsistency, rent-seeking, and elite capture reflects the continuation of this extractive logic. Instead of building accountable institutions, post-independence leaders consolidated authoritarian structures, prioritizing political patronage over service delivery.<sup>3</sup> Elections are frequent but often marred by manipulation, while the judiciary and civil service are weakened by clientelist networks. This dynamic has produced what scholars call “neo-patrimonialism,” where formal democratic frameworks mask underlying informal loyalties and prebendal politics.<sup>4</sup>

Nigeria’s dependence on petroleum further entrenched governance failures. The oil booms of the 1970s centralized revenue in federal hands, severed the taxation–accountability link, and entrenched a rentier political culture. Agriculture and manufacturing declined, while oil rents funded patronage and weakened fiscal federalism.<sup>5</sup> The result was bloated bureaucracies, fragmented development, and declining state legitimacy.

Federalism, originally designed to accommodate diversity, has instead become a battleground for resource control and ethnic competition. The federal character principle, though intended to promote inclusivity, often undermines meritocracy and efficiency.<sup>6</sup> Coupled with widespread corruption across all levels of government, this has further hollowed out public institutions. Anticorruption agencies exist but are frequently undermined by selective prosecution and executive interference.<sup>7</sup>

The cumulative effect is a fragile state where public trust is eroded, social contracts are weakened, and citizens increasingly rely on informal networks. Governance is perceived less as public service than as a tool of elite enrichment. Without decisive reform, Nigeria risks remaining trapped in a cycle of authoritarianism, exclusion, and underdevelopment.<sup>8</sup> This study therefore examines the historical and structural roots of bad governance in Nigeria and proposes pathways for revamping governance to build a more inclusive and sustainable polity.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

This research aims to examine the root causes, manifestations, and consequences of bad governance in Nigeria across multiple dimensions — political, economic, legal, institutional, social, and international. It seeks to study revamping Nigeria from the shackles of bad governance.

The key objectives of this research are to:

1. Explore the colonial legacy and its influence on Nigeria's post-independence governance structures.
2. Examine the structural, institutional, and political factors that have perpetuated bad governance.

3. Assess the economic, legal, and social impacts of poor governance on national development.
4. Evaluate Nigeria's international governance reputation and the role of external actors.
5. Propose strategic, multi-sectoral reforms and policy actions that can guide Nigeria towards national revamping.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, relying entirely on secondary sources such as scholarly books, peer-reviewed journals, official government documents, and reports from reputable global institutions including the World Bank, UNDP, and Transparency International. It uses documentary analysis to interpret Nigeria's governance failures from a historical and institutional perspective, with a focus on identifying patterns of political, legal, economic, and social decay. The research is descriptive and analytical, centered on Nigeria as a case study, with references to global governance benchmarks like the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and World Governance Indicators (WGI).

The study is framed by relevant theoretical lenses, including institutional decay, neo-patrimonialism, and multi-level governance theory, which help explain how elite capture, weak accountability, and dysfunctional institutions shape bad governance in Nigeria. Although it does not include primary fieldwork or interviews, the study's reliance

on credible secondary data ensures a valid, fact-rich, and policy-relevant analysis of Nigeria's long-standing governance crisis.

### **Scope of the Study**

This research explores the multifaceted problem of bad governance in Nigeria, covering political, economic, legal, institutional, and social aspects. The analysis spans from independence in 1960 to 2023, with contextual references to the colonial era to understand the historical roots of governance failure. The study focuses on federal institutions and national dynamics, using cases such as the EFCC, INEC, and the judiciary to illustrate systemic issues.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review explores the academic, historical and policy writing that have addressed the subject of governance and economic development in Nigeria. This literature review critically analyses the work of various scholars, policy report and empirical studies that have examined the concept of governance and its implications for national development.

Falola and Heaton's *A History of Nigeria* offers an invaluable historical backdrop for situating contemporary governance challenges within Nigeria's colonial and postcolonial experiences. The authors provide a richly detailed account of how Nigeria's precolonial

governance systems were dismantled and replaced by British colonial structures that prioritized administrative centralization and resource extraction<sup>1</sup>.

The book highlights how the British created a dual economy—a modern export-oriented economy (grounded in agriculture and later oil) coexisting with a largely neglected traditional economy, resulting in economic and political imbalance<sup>1</sup>. This system, they argue, laid the foundation for elite fragmentation, ethnic division, and clientelistic politics, which persist today. Moreover, Falola and Heaton stress how colonial governance deliberately avoided institutionalizing democratic values. Instead, it relied on indirect rule and racial hierarchy, which created a culture of authoritarianism, lack of accountability, and dependency on centralized authority<sup>2</sup>.

Francis Fukuyama's two key contributions—*Political Order and Political Decay* (2014) and his 2013 article “What is Governance?”—provide foundational theories for understanding both the evolution and breakdown of political systems. In *Political Order and Political Decay*, Fukuyama examines how modern political institutions emerge, stabilize, and deteriorate over time, proposing that governance depends on the dynamic balance between state capacity, rule of law, and democratic accountability<sup>3</sup>. Fukuyama's warning that political decay arises when institutions no longer evolve in response to changing social needs is strikingly applicable to Nigeria, where political institutions such as the National Assembly or civil service often remain static and unresponsive. According to him:

> “There is no automatic mechanism that makes political institutions self-correcting; without reformist pressure, institutions tend to decay rather than improve.”<sup>3</sup>

This resonates deeply with the Nigerian case, where public institutions—rather than transforming post-independence—often inherited colonial-era extractive logics, promoting patronage over performance. The disjunction between democratic form and authoritarian practice, visible in Nigeria’s democratic elections but autocratic political culture, exemplifies what Fukuyama terms “repatrimonialization”—a return to governance based on personal loyalty and private networks rather than rational-bureaucratic order<sup>4</sup>.

His earlier article “What is Governance?” complements this perspective by dissecting the components of effective governance. He argues that the quality of government matters more than the quantity of laws or democratic rituals<sup>7</sup>. It provides a conceptual foundation for understanding the multifaceted dimensions of governance that this study seeks to examine. Fukuyama defines governance through three principal pillars—state capacity, rule of law, and accountability—and argues that the presence of formal institutions alone is insufficient without effective functionality, legal integrity, and sanction mechanisms for public wrongdoing<sup>19</sup>. This framework directly informs the analysis of bad governance in Nigeria by focusing attention on whether the Nigerian state possesses not just formal government structures, but the capacity to enforce laws, resist elite capture, and deliver public services.

Robert Rotberg's *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* offers a comprehensive and multidimensional exploration of the causes and indicators of state failure, many of which resonate deeply with the Nigerian context. Rotberg defines failed states not simply by their collapse into anarchy, but more precisely by their inability to provide political goods such as security, law, justice, and economic opportunity to their citizens<sup>5</sup>. He explains that these states are often characterized by a legitimacy vacuum, where state structures exist but do not command trust or authority. Rotberg's theoretical framework is particularly applicable to Nigeria, where despite the presence of constitutional democracy and a multiparty system, the state consistently fails to deliver critical services. This failure, according to Rotberg, breeds corruption, insurgency, poverty, and democratic decay<sup>6</sup>. He argues that:

> "Nation-states fail because they are convulsed by internal violence and can no longer deliver positive political goods to their inhabitants. Their governments lose legitimacy, and the nation-state itself becomes illegitimate in the eyes of a growing plurality of its citizens."<sup>7</sup>

This assertion mirrors the Nigerian case, especially in regions like the North-East, where insecurity from Boko Haram insurgency continues unabated, or in the Niger Delta, where environmental degradation and oil theft thrive under ineffective state policing.

Terry Lynn Karl's landmark book, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States*, offers a critical and highly applicable lens for analyzing the Nigerian political economy,

particularly the toxic relationship between oil wealth and governance failure. In this work, Karl examines how countries rich in oil often suffer from what she calls the “resource curse”—a paradoxical condition where abundant natural resources, rather than fostering development, fuel authoritarianism, corruption, and economic mismanagement<sup>8</sup>.

Peter Lewis’s comparative work, *Growing Apart: Oil, Politics, and Economic Change in Indonesia and Nigeria*, is a rich resource for contextualizing Nigeria’s governance dysfunction in a broader developmental frame. Lewis examines why two oil-rich nations—Indonesia and Nigeria—pursued different political and economic trajectories despite starting with similar conditions in the 1960s. His conclusion: Nigeria’s institutional fragility and elite fragmentation created a rentier system where oil wealth was siphoned off by political patrons rather than invested in public goods<sup>10</sup>.

Rotimi Suberu’s *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria* explores a deeply entrenched dimension of Nigeria’s governance challenge: the intersection of ethnic pluralism and constitutional federalism. Suberu contends that Nigeria’s brand of federalism is more nominal than functional, as the central government retains excessive fiscal and political control at the expense of the states<sup>11</sup>. This pseudo-federal structure, Suberu argues, has not only stoked ethnic marginalization and grievance, but has also fuelled rent-seeking, political instability, and weak accountability mechanisms. The ethno-political manipulation of federal character principles, for instance, has entrenched mediocrity in public service, deepened distrust among Nigeria’s ethnic nationalities, and distorted

recruitment into public institutions. Furthermore, Suberu argues that constitutional reform—not just electoral reform—is essential to building a truly inclusive governance system.

Jide Olokoya's *Corruption and Governance in Nigeria* provides a grounded, Nigeria-focused analysis of how systemic corruption undermines governance and state legitimacy. Olokoya makes a strong case that corruption in Nigeria is not episodic, but institutionalized—deeply embedded in public administration, politics, and the judiciary<sup>12</sup>. It is particularly helpful in diagnosing the bureaucratic dimension of bad governance. It examines corruption across public procurement, budgeting, recruitment, and project implementation, demonstrating that Nigeria's institutional failure stems not only from leadership but also from weak accountability mechanisms, poor record-keeping, and overcentralization. Olokoya draws a direct link between governance failure and declining trust in state institutions, arguing that:

> “Governance cannot thrive where integrity is constantly compromised by rent-seeking behavior and elite manipulation of public institutions.”<sup>13</sup>

Benjamin Nwabueze – *Constitutionalism in the Emergent States* is a foundational African legal-political text that deals with the failure of constitutionalism in postcolonial states, especially in Africa. He asserts that many post-independence African constitutions were legalistic documents with no real institutional or cultural support for democratic governance<sup>14</sup>. In the Nigerian context, Nwabueze is particularly critical of how

constitutional rule has been repeatedly undermined by military interference, judicial compromise, executive overreach, and legislative docility.

Remi Okeke's *Public Policy Analysis and Decision-Making in Nigeria* provides an incisive and indigenous account of how public policy failure serves as both a symptom and cause of Nigeria's governance crisis. Okeke argues that governance in Nigeria is defined by policy confusion, inconsistent implementation, and elite-captured decision-making processes, leading to a state of paralysis in virtually all sectors of public life<sup>15</sup>. In his critique, Okeke highlights how Nigeria's policy environment is riddled with what he terms "administrative incontinence"—a state of constant policy churn without meaningful results. Okeke identifies several core problems: poor inter-agency coordination, weak feedback loops, overcentralization, and lack of public accountability. His emphasis on policy as a political tool rather than a public good reinforces the argument that bad governance is not a random phenomenon, but an entrenched pattern within Nigeria's policymaking institutions.

Claude Ake's *A Political Economy of Africa* presents a radical, yet essential, critique of governance in postcolonial African states. Ake identifies the root of Africa's governance crisis in the colonial legacy of authoritarianism, elite domination, and externally imposed economic structures<sup>16</sup>. He argues that the African state was historically constructed to serve colonial interests—primarily the extraction of raw materials—rather than to mediate public interests or build participatory institutions. This legacy, he asserts, has

been reproduced by post-independence leaders who inherited colonial machinery but used it for self-enrichment.

Bratton, Michael, and Nicolas van de Walle – *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* presents a comparative analysis of regime transitions across sub-Saharan Africa, offering deep insights into why some countries achieve meaningful democratization while others relapse into authoritarianism or stagnate under “hybrid regimes.”<sup>17</sup> Their central thesis is that the legacy of authoritarian rule, the weakness of civil society, and the structure of neopatrimonial politics are the key determinants of democratic outcomes in African states. In relation to Nigeria, their work is invaluable for understanding the shallow roots of democratic culture, despite frequent elections since 1999. Bratton and van de Walle note that in many African states, formal democratic transitions are undermined by neopatrimonial practices—a system in which state resources are used for personal patronage rather than public interest.

Elijah I. Ezeani’s *Fundamentals of Public Administration* provides a valuable Nigerian-based perspective on how public bureaucracies operate and how administrative systems can either promote or obstruct good governance. Ezeani argues that the failure of governance in Nigeria is partly due to the politicization of the civil service, lack of capacity, poor remuneration, and insufficient performance evaluation frameworks<sup>18</sup>. His book outlines key concepts such as delegation of authority, public service ethics, and administrative responsibility—all of which are necessary for a well-functioning state but

largely absent in Nigeria’s current system. His work supports the argument that a technocratic, transparent, and autonomous civil service is essential to revamp Nigeria from its governance crisis.

The empirical study by J. Shola Omotola in *African Affairs*, “Elections and Democratic Transition in Nigeria... Under the Fourth Republic,” offers a data-rich account of electoral dynamics from 1999 onwards<sup>20</sup>. Omotola demonstrates that, despite periodic electoral progress, Nigeria’s democratic process is marred by structural inadequacies—including manipulated electoral institutions, vote-buying, violence, and pre-election manipulation. His findings directly inform us, showing how flawed elections weaken legitimacy, diminish civic trust, and entrench a cycle of bad governance where democratically elected leaders lack genuine accountability.

The World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)—compiled by Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi—supply a crucial comparative dataset measuring control of corruption, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, voice & accountability, and political stability<sup>21</sup>. Nigeria repeatedly scores poorly across these dimensions, confirming that systemic governance failure is not anecdotal but measurable. These indicators provide empirical benchmarks against which Nigeria’s governance reform strategy can be assessed, while also identifying specific areas for targeted intervention—such as judicial independence, regulatory coherence, and anti-corruption enforcement.

Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI 2023) further reinforces the gravity of corruption in shaping Nigeria’s public and private sectors<sup>22</sup>. Nigeria’s persistently poor ranking, hovering in the bottom third globally, reflects entrenched malfeasance in public procurement, government contracts, and public service delivery. This evidence is essential in diagnosing the scale of the corruption challenge and underlines the need for anti-graft reforms coupled with stronger enforcement and political will in the revamping agenda.

The UNDP Human Development Report 2022 illustrates that governance failure in Nigeria is inseparable from human development stagnation<sup>23</sup>. Indicators such as low life expectancy, poor educational outcomes, and high inequality correlate with weak governance practices—particularly in the areas of public spending, institutional efficiency, and civic inclusion. By linking governance to human development metrics, the UNDP report underscores why revamping governance must also focus on state capacity to deliver essential services equitably.

Human Rights Watch’s report “Corruption on Trial? The Record of Nigeria’s EFCC” offers a diagnostic study of Nigeria’s primary anti-corruption agency<sup>24</sup>. While recognizing the EFCC’s successes in high-profile indictments, HRW highlights its selective implementation—persecution of political rivals rather than systemic enforcement—and severely low conviction rates. This corroborates Fukuyama’s point on the importance of accountability systems that work impartially, and it validates calls for

deeper structural reform of anti-graft institutions, including prosecutorial independence, transparent case management, and legal consistency.

Amnesty International’s “Selective Justice Undermines Democracy” interrogates the Nigerian judicial system’s politicized behavior, noting frequent failure to hold officials accountable for human rights violations, electoral manipulation, and executive overreach<sup>25</sup>. The report argues that justice is often denied to dissenters or opposition figures while privileges are granted to those in power—eroding public trust and enabling authoritarian behavior.

The International Crisis Group’s examination of electoral systems in “Nigeria’s Elections: Technology and Credibility Challenges” highlights recurring failures of electronic voting systems, logistical mismanagement, and lackluster oversight<sup>26</sup>. The report’s detailed critique shows that technological and administrative glitches, far from being neutral mishaps, actively frequent opportunities for fraud. These insights are crucial for the project’s reform proposals around INEC, where stable, credible elections must be supported by robust systems, trained personnel, and transparent procedures.

In conclusion, while existing literature creates rich insights into the challenges of governance and development in Nigeria, few research offers historical comparative approach. This research fills the gap by tracing Nigeria trajectory from relative order and disorder and identifying what lessons can be reclaimed to rebuild the state.

## **CHAPTERIZATION**

### **Chapter One: Background to the Study**

Introduces the research by outlining the Introduction, Aims and Objectives, Methodology, Scope, and Literature Review.

### **Chapter Two: Tracing the Roots of Bad Governance in Nigeria – The Role of Colonial Influence**

Explores governance under colonial rule, focusing on administrative systems and the colonial economic structure.

### **Chapter Three: Governance Failures in Nigeria – Development Consequences and External Influences**

Examines Nigeria’s governance decline from independence to today, emphasizing weak institutions, corruption, oil dependency, ethno-religious politics, electoral fraud, and external actors.

### **Chapter Four: Revamping Governance – Strategies for Sustainable Reform:**

Presents practical solutions to Nigeria’s governance challenges.

### **Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion**

Summarizes key findings and provide recommendations.

### **Endnotes**

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **TRACING THE ROOTS OF BAD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA — THE ROLE OF COLONIAL INFLUENCE**

#### **Introduction**

To understand the persistence of bad governance in Nigeria, it is necessary to trace its historical foundations. Governance failures in the post-independence era did not emerge

spontaneously but were shaped by centuries of pre-colonial political traditions, followed by the disruptive imposition of colonial rule. Pre-colonial Nigeria, though politically diverse, exhibited systems of governance that reflected indigenous values of accountability, participation, and social order. These systems, however, were significantly disrupted by British colonial policies, which reorganized authority, prioritized economic extraction, and entrenched administrative structures that weakened traditional institutions. The colonial experience also sowed seeds of ethnic and regional division, while establishing authoritarian administrative cultures that continued after independence. This chapter therefore explores the trajectory of governance from pre-colonial times through colonial rule, highlighting how colonial structures undermined indigenous institutions and created legacies of authoritarianism, corruption, and weak institutions that persist in Nigeria today.<sup>1</sup>

## **2.2 The Concept of Governance in Pre-Colonial Nigeria**

Before the advent of British rule, governance across the territories now known as Nigeria was not uniform but reflected the cultural and political diversity of its people. Among the Yoruba in the southwest, governance revolved around centralized kingdoms such as Oyo, Ife, and Ijebu. The Alaafin of Oyo, for example, wielded considerable authority but was constrained by a powerful council of state, the Oyo Mesi, whose members could compel

him to abdicate if he ruled tyrannically. Age-grade associations and guilds also ensured accountability, while religious traditions reinforced moral responsibility in leadership.<sup>2</sup>

In the Hausa-Fulani emirates of the north, the Sokoto Caliphate established after the jihad of Uthman dan Fodio in 1804 represented one of the most centralized and expansive systems in pre-colonial Africa. Authority was vested in emirs who governed with a combination of Islamic law (sharia), taxation systems, and administrative structures that extended over large territories. The emirate system maintained bureaucratic efficiency and social order, but it also relied on reciprocal obligations: rulers were expected to ensure justice and the welfare of their subjects.<sup>3</sup>

By contrast, many Igbo-speaking communities in southeastern Nigeria operated acephalous, decentralized systems. Authority was dispersed among lineage heads, village assemblies, age-grade groups, and secret societies. Decisions were often reached through consensus, reflecting a participatory ethos. Leadership positions were earned, not inherited, and the collective nature of decision-making reduced the risk of autocracy.<sup>4</sup>

Despite their variations, these systems had one thing in common: governance was anchored in indigenous legitimacy, with multiple checks and balances ensuring accountability. Leaders could not act arbitrarily without facing sanctions from councils, assemblies, or social institutions. In other words, governance was embedded within social norms, and rulers derived authority not from coercion but from recognition by their communities.<sup>5</sup>

## **2.3 Colonial Rule and the Establishment of Administrative Structures**

The British colonial conquest, beginning with the annexation of Lagos in 1861 and culminating in the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914 under Lord Frederick Lugard, fundamentally disrupted these indigenous systems. The logic of colonial administration was not to develop self-governing institutions but to extract resources and maintain order at minimal cost. Administrative structures were therefore designed for control rather than participation.<sup>6</sup>

A centralized bureaucracy was established, dominated by expatriate officials and stratified along racial lines. Nigerians were excluded from senior administrative and decision-making positions, relegated instead to subordinate roles. Statutory laws introduced by the colonial state subordinated customary law, except where it did not conflict with colonial interests. The emphasis was on taxation, resource extraction, and the facilitation of trade in raw materials such as palm oil, groundnuts, cocoa, and cotton. Railways, roads, and ports were built primarily to serve this purpose, linking production zones to the coast rather than integrating the Nigerian economy internally.<sup>7</sup>

Colonial constitutions, such as the Clifford Constitution of 1922 and later the Richards Constitution of 1946, provided for limited African participation but fell short of establishing democratic self-rule. Representation was narrow, restricted largely to elites in urban centers. Thus, colonial administration was authoritarian, hierarchical, and

extractive, embedding habits of governance that emphasized control from above rather than accountability to the governed.<sup>8</sup>

## **2.4 The Warrant Chief System and Indirect Rule**

Lord Lugard's system of indirect rule was the cornerstone of colonial administration. It relied on governing through traditional rulers in regions with centralized authority, such as the northern emirates, while improvising where no such structures existed. In the north, the British co-opted emirs, preserving their authority but making them accountable to colonial residents. This allowed colonial officers to govern vast territories with minimal manpower.<sup>9</sup>

In southeastern Nigeria, however, indirect rule took a different turn. The acephalous nature of Igbo society, with its decentralized political traditions, posed difficulties for the British. To overcome this, they appointed warrant chiefs — individuals given official recognition and authority by colonial officers to collect taxes, adjudicate disputes, and mobilize labor. Unlike traditional leaders, warrant chiefs lacked legitimacy within their communities, deriving authority solely from colonial recognition.<sup>10</sup>

This system generated widespread resentment and abuse of power. Warrant chiefs often acted arbitrarily, exploiting their communities while serving colonial interests. The discontent culminated in uprisings such as the Aba Women's Riot of 1929, when thousands of women protested against excessive taxation and warrant chief abuses.<sup>11</sup>

Indirect rule therefore undermined traditional authority in Igbo areas and entrenched

authoritarian governance structures alien to local political culture. Even in areas where it was more compatible, such as the north, indirect rule entrenched hierarchical governance and discouraged participatory politics.<sup>12</sup>

## **2.5 The Structure of the Colonial Economy and Its Legacy**

Colonial economic policy prioritized resource extraction. Cash-crop production — cocoa in the west, groundnuts and cotton in the north, and palm produce in the east — became the backbone of the colonial economy. Infrastructure such as the Lagos–Kano railway and Port Harcourt port was constructed not to integrate Nigerian markets but to facilitate the export of raw materials to Britain.<sup>13</sup>

Taxation policies, such as the introduction of head and hut taxes, compelled peasants into the cash economy, often undermining subsistence production. Migrant labor systems uprooted families and shifted populations towards plantations, mines, and urban centers. At the same time, the colonial state discouraged industrial development, fearing competition with British manufacturers. Nigeria became locked into a dependent economic relationship as a supplier of raw materials and an importer of finished goods.<sup>14</sup>

The legacy of this structure was profound. It produced uneven development across regions, reinforced regional economic specialization, and left Nigeria with a fragile industrial base. The rentier character of the state also began here, as political control

increasingly meant access to economic resources. This dependent economic structure would later be mirrored in the post-independence reliance on oil, with similar consequences of corruption, inequality, and vulnerability to external shocks.<sup>15</sup>

## **2.6 Colonial Legacies and the Weakening of Indigenous Institutions**

Colonialism systematically eroded indigenous governance institutions. By empowering warrant chiefs and co-opting emirs and obas, colonial rule shifted authority from community-based legitimacy to colonial recognition. This weakened traditional checks and balances, as leaders were now accountable to colonial officers rather than their communities.<sup>16</sup>

The dual legal system, where statutory law took precedence over customary law, marginalized indigenous mechanisms of justice. Communal methods of dispute resolution gave way to colonial courts, often alien to local customs and values. Education systems, introduced mainly by missionaries, created an elite class whose worldview was shaped more by colonial ideals than by indigenous traditions. This Western-educated elite would later dominate politics, often reproducing authoritarian practices they had observed under colonial rule.<sup>17</sup>

Colonial boundaries and administrative divisions also hardened ethnic and regional identities. The amalgamation of 1914 created an artificial state, binding together groups with little shared history of political unity. Colonial policies of divide-and-rule deepened ethnic consciousness, as resources and appointments were often distributed along ethnic

lines. This legacy of ethnicized politics continued into independence, fuelling conflicts and undermining nation-building.<sup>18</sup>

## **2.7 Transition from Colonial Rule to Independence**

The transition to independence was marked by constitutional reforms. The Richards Constitution of 1946 introduced regional councils but preserved British dominance. The Macpherson Constitution of 1951 expanded regional autonomy and political participation, though power remained largely in colonial hands. The Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 further entrenched federalism, devolving power to the regions.<sup>19</sup>

Political parties emerged along regional lines: the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the north, the Action Group (AG) in the west, and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in the east. These parties reflected regional and ethnic identities rather than national unity. By the time independence was achieved in 1960, Nigeria had inherited a federal structure marked by deep divisions, weak central institutions, and a political class more concerned with regional dominance than national integration.<sup>20</sup>

## **2.8 Link Between Colonial Governance and Contemporary Bad Governance**

The legacies of colonial governance remain evident in Nigeria's contemporary political challenges. First, the authoritarian administrative culture established by the colonial state created a governance tradition that prioritized control over accountability. This pattern

carried into the post-independence state, where leaders frequently ruled with little regard for popular participation.<sup>21</sup>

Second, the dependent economic structure of the colonial era laid the foundation for Nigeria's post-independence reliance on oil. Just as the colonial state relied on cash-crop exports, the post-colonial state became dependent on petroleum exports, reinforcing rentierism, corruption, and vulnerability to external price shocks.<sup>22</sup>

Third, the weakening of indigenous institutions and the imposition of artificial administrative divisions entrenched ethnic politics. The colonial manipulation of identity hardened divisions that continue to dominate Nigerian politics today, making consensus-building and national cohesion difficult.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, colonial practices normalized corruption and patronage. The colonial state rewarded collaboration and punished dissent, fostering a political culture where access to power meant access to resources. This legacy has endured, manifesting in the prebendal politics of Nigeria's contemporary governance system.<sup>24</sup>

In conclusion, the foundations of Nigeria's contemporary governance challenges are inseparable from the legacies of colonial rule. While pre-colonial societies had varied but functional systems of accountability, colonialism dismantled these institutions and replaced them with authoritarian structures built for control and economic exploitation. The introduction of indirect rule and the warrant chief system eroded legitimacy, while the colonial economy entrenched dependence on resource extraction and uneven

development.<sup>25</sup> By independence in 1960, Nigeria had inherited weak institutions, politicized ethnicity, and an economy tied to external interests — conditions that continue to shape patterns of corruption, authoritarianism, and poor governance today.<sup>26</sup>

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## CHAPTER THREE

### GOVERNANCE FAILURE IN NIGERIA

#### Introduction

Nigeria 's political history since independence in 1960 reflects a paradox of great promise undermined by recurrent governance failures. At independence, the country possessed enormous human and natural resources and was widely expected to emerge as a leader in Africa 's political and economic transformation. However, the early optimism of self-rule soon gave way to deepening challenges, as fragile institutions inherited from colonial rule proved inadequate in managing the pressures of ethnic pluralism, political competition, and the demands of nation-building.<sup>1</sup>

Over the decades, Nigeria 's governance trajectory has been shaped by cycles of military authoritarianism, oil-driven economic distortions, institutional decay, and failed reform efforts. Each stage of the country 's political evolution has been marked by persistent corruption, weak accountability structures, and divisive ethno-religious politics, all of which have eroded the legitimacy of the state and stunted democratic consolidation.<sup>2</sup> The transition to civilian rule in 1999 rekindled hopes for democratic renewal, yet successive governments have continued to grapple with governance deficits ranging from electoral malpractice to insecurity and mismanagement of resources.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter examines the stages of Nigeria 's governance decline, tracing how initial expectations of prosperity and stability gave way to authoritarian rule, rentier state dynamics, structural dependence on external actors, and contemporary governance crises. By situating corruption, weak institutions, oil dependence, and electoral fraud within Nigeria 's historical trajectory, the chapter underscores how governance failures have produced enduring consequences such as poverty, insecurity, brain drain, and chronic underdevelopment.

### **3.2 Stages of Governance Decline in Nigeria**

The trajectory of Nigeria 's governance decline can be best understood by examining distinct historical stages. Each phase represents not only shifts in leadership and institutional structures but also deepening governance challenges that progressively eroded state capacity and public trust.

#### **The Post-Independence Era (1960–1966): Hope and Early Weaknesses**

Nigeria attained independence on October 1, 1960, with enormous optimism both domestically and internationally. The federal parliamentary system inherited from Britain was expected to foster unity among Nigeria 's diverse regions and consolidate democratic governance. Leaders like Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and

President Nnamdi Azikiwe represented the face of this democratic experiment, symbolizing both unity and federal representation. However, despite the euphoria of independence, deep-rooted structural weaknesses soon began to undermine governance.

The political arrangement of the First Republic was heavily shaped by colonial legacies that emphasized regionalism over national integration. The three major regions — the North, East, and West — were dominated respectively by the Northern People 's Congress (NPC), the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), and the Action Group (AG). Rather than fostering cooperation, these parties accentuated ethno-regional identities and transformed the federal system into a zero-sum competition for power and resources.<sup>1</sup> The Western Region crisis of 1962, marked by violent political rivalry within the AG and the subsequent declaration of a state of emergency, highlighted the fragility of Nigeria 's democratic structures.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, corruption and electoral malpractice began to seep into the political process. The 1964 general elections were marred by widespread irregularities, intimidation, and boycotts, while the 1965 Western Region elections degenerated into chaos and violence, popularly referred to as " Operation Wetie. " <sup>3</sup> These events delegitimized the government in the eyes of many Nigerians and created fertile ground for military intervention. The inability of the First Republic to effectively address economic

inequalities, ethnic tensions, and political instability laid the foundations for the eventual collapse of civilian rule.

The January 1966 coup, led by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and other young military officers, abruptly ended the First Republic. Though the coup was justified as an attempt to end corruption and restore order, it instead introduced a new stage of governance defined by military authoritarianism.<sup>4</sup>

### **Military Rule and Authoritarian Centralisation (1966–1979; 1983–1999)**

The military 's entry into politics marked a decisive turning point in Nigeria 's governance trajectory. While the initial justification for intervention was to curb corruption and restore stability, prolonged military dominance over the political sphere deepened governance decline. The military ruled Nigeria for nearly 29 of its first 39 years of independence, and in that period, governance became highly centralized, authoritarian, and often repressive.

General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, who emerged as Head of State after the January 1966 coup, attempted to replace Nigeria 's federal structure with a unitary system through Decree No. 34. This move alienated many regions, particularly the North, where fears of Igbo domination intensified. His assassination in the July 1966 counter-coup, which brought Yakubu Gowon to power, further entrenched ethnic mistrust and led to the

outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970).<sup>5</sup> The war, while preserving national unity, militarized politics and entrenched the supremacy of coercive power over civilian institutions.

Successive military regimes consolidated authoritarian control, sidelined democratic institutions, and weakened governance structures. Between 1970 and 1979, the Gowon, Murtala Mohammed, and Olusegun Obasanjo administrations benefitted from oil revenues but squandered opportunities to establish accountable governance. Oil wealth funded massive infrastructural projects, yet it also fueled corruption, mismanagement, and the entrenchment of a rentier state mentality.<sup>6</sup>

After a brief democratic experiment (the Second Republic, 1979–1983), military rule returned under General Muhammadu Buhari following a coup justified by allegations of corruption and economic mismanagement under President Shehu Shagari.<sup>7</sup> Buhari 's regime, though austere and disciplined, curtailed press freedom and engaged in human rights abuses. He was overthrown in 1985 by General Ibrahim Babangida, whose regime institutionalized corruption and clientelism on an unprecedented scale. The annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, widely considered free and fair, delegitimized his government and further eroded public trust.<sup>8</sup>

The subsequent regime of General Sani Abacha (1993–1998) is often remembered as the nadir of governance in Nigeria. Abacha 's dictatorship was marked by extreme repression, human rights violations, and unprecedented looting of public resources — with billions of dollars siphoned into foreign accounts.<sup>9</sup> The execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni activists in 1995 drew global condemnation and led to Nigeria 's suspension from the Commonwealth.<sup>10</sup>

By the time democracy was restored in 1999 under Olusegun Obasanjo 's civilian administration, decades of authoritarian military rule had weakened institutions, entrenched corruption, centralized governance excessively, and eroded public trust in the state. Military legacies thus remain a defining factor in Nigeria 's contemporary governance challenges.

### **The Oil Boom and Rentier State Economy (1970s–1980s)**

The oil boom of the 1970s marked a decisive turning point in Nigeria 's political economy, fundamentally reshaping governance and development trajectories. Following the discovery of crude oil in Oloibiri in 1956 and the rise in global demand in the early 1970s, Nigeria quickly transformed from an agrarian-based economy to a mono-product

economy dependent on petroleum exports. By 1973, the Arab-Israeli war and subsequent oil embargo triggered a dramatic spike in global oil prices, increasing Nigeria 's oil revenue from ₦176 million in 1970 to over ₦12 billion by 1980.<sup>11</sup>

This sudden wealth created the conditions for what scholars describe as a ,rentier state, a political economy in which the government derives substantial revenue from external rent (in this case, crude oil exports), thereby reducing its reliance on domestic taxation.<sup>12</sup> As a consequence, the Nigerian state became less accountable to its citizens, since taxation—historically a key driver of state-society bargaining—was no longer a central source of revenue. Instead, oil wealth financed large-scale infrastructural projects, ambitious industrialization plans, and heavy government spending.<sup>13</sup> However, the mismanagement of oil revenue also entrenched corruption, fueled patronage politics, and fostered a culture of dependency on state largesse.

The agricultural sector, once Nigeria 's economic backbone, suffered from neglect. Cocoa, groundnuts, and palm oil exports sharply declined, while food imports soared.<sup>14</sup> This structural imbalance reflected what development economists term the " Dutch Disease " a phenomenon where reliance on natural resource rents undermines other productive sectors of the economy. By the late 1970s, governance failures became

apparent: oil revenues were squandered on white-elephant projects, and public accountability weakened as elites enriched themselves through illicit rent-seeking.<sup>15</sup>

In essence, while the oil boom initially provided Nigeria with unprecedented resources and global visibility, it sowed the seeds of long-term fragility. The rentier state economy deepened Nigeria 's dependence on volatile global oil markets, laying the groundwork for economic vulnerability and social dislocation in subsequent decades.

### **Structural Adjustment and Economic Dislocation (1980s–1990s)**

By the early 1980s, falling oil prices exposed the fragility of Nigeria 's rentier state economy. The collapse of crude oil prices in 1981, coupled with rising foreign debt, ballooning imports, and rampant corruption, precipitated one of Nigeria 's deepest economic crises.<sup>16</sup> The government, unable to sustain high levels of spending, turned to international financial institutions for relief. In 1986, under General Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria adopted the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.<sup>17</sup>

The SAP was designed to liberalize the Nigerian economy, reduce state intervention, and promote market-oriented reforms. Key components included the devaluation of the naira, deregulation of trade, privatization of state-owned enterprises, and removal of subsidies on basic commodities.<sup>18</sup> While the program was framed as a pathway to fiscal discipline and economic efficiency, its impact on ordinary Nigerians was devastating. The sharp devaluation of the currency eroded purchasing power, inflation soared, and the removal of subsidies on food and fuel triggered widespread hardship.<sup>19</sup>

Socially, SAP exacerbated poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Many industries collapsed due to the high cost of imports and low domestic production, leading to mass layoffs and the growth of the informal economy.<sup>20</sup> The education and health sectors suffered from underfunding, resulting in declining literacy rates, poor infrastructure, and mass emigration of skilled professionals—a phenomenon often referred to as “brain drain.”<sup>21</sup>

Politically, the SAP reinforced authoritarian tendencies, as successive military regimes repressed popular resistance to austerity measures. Civil society groups, students, and labor unions launched protests against the program, arguing that it prioritized the interests of global financial institutions over national development.<sup>22</sup> The program also deepened Nigeria’s external dependency, as debt servicing consumed a growing share of national revenue.

In summary, the SAP era not only entrenched economic hardship but also accelerated governance decline by undermining state legitimacy and social trust. Instead of fostering sustainable growth, the program entrenched Nigeria 's vulnerability to external shocks, widened the gap between the ruling elite and the masses, and left behind a legacy of economic dislocation that continues to shape Nigeria 's development challenges.

### **5 Democratic Transition and Persistent Governance Deficits (1999–Present)**

The return to civilian rule in 1999, after over three decades of intermittent military dictatorship, was heralded as a new dawn for Nigeria. The inauguration of President Olusegun Obasanjo marked the beginning of the Fourth Republic and raised expectations for democratic consolidation, institutional reforms, and sustainable development. However, while the transition ended authoritarian rule, it did not erase the entrenched structural weaknesses and governance failures that had accumulated over the years. Instead, Nigeria 's democracy has continued to grapple with persistent deficits that limit its ability to deliver on the promises of accountable governance and socio-economic transformation.<sup>23</sup>

One of the most pressing governance deficits has been the weakness of state institutions. Despite constitutional guarantees of separation of powers, Nigeria 's legislature and

judiciary often remain subordinate to executive dominance, undermining effective checks and balances.<sup>24</sup> This has enabled the persistence of systemic corruption, as successive administrations have struggled to enforce transparency and accountability in public office. Institutions like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) have recorded notable prosecutions, yet elite impunity and selective justice continue to undermine public confidence in governance.<sup>25</sup>

Electoral malpractices have also marred Nigeria ' s democratic journey. Elections, though regular, are frequently plagued by vote-buying, intimidation, ballot-box snatching, and flawed collation processes. While electoral reforms have been attempted — such as the introduction of the Independent National Electoral Commission ' s (INEC) biometric voter registration and the recent adoption of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) — questions about credibility and transparency remain.<sup>26</sup> This has reinforced a cycle of low voter trust and declining political participation, especially among youth.

Ethno-religious divisions have further complicated Nigeria ' s democratic consolidation. Power-sharing arrangements such as the " zoning " system within political parties, while intended to foster inclusivity, often deepen ethnic polarization rather than building genuine national unity.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, democratic governance has struggled to address

widespread insecurity — from Boko Haram 's insurgency in the northeast, to farmer–herder conflicts in the middle belt, to banditry and secessionist agitations elsewhere. The inability of the state to secure lives and property continues to erode citizens ' trust in democratic institutions.

Economically, the Fourth Republic has witnessed alternating periods of growth and stagnation. The early 2000s saw debt relief from the Paris Club and increased foreign investment, but gains were offset by recurrent oil price volatility, overdependence on hydrocarbons, and failure to diversify the economy.<sup>28</sup> More recently, inflation, rising unemployment, and widespread poverty have intensified public disillusionment with democratic governance, as the dividends of democracy remain elusive for most Nigerians.

Thus, while Nigeria 's democratic transition in 1999 marked a critical milestone, persistent governance deficits — weak institutions, corruption, electoral malpractice, insecurity, and economic mismanagement — have continued to constrain the country 's political and developmental trajectory. The Nigerian experience illustrates that democracy, in itself, does not guarantee good governance; rather, without deep institutional reforms and accountability, democratic regimes risk reproducing the same failures as authoritarian ones.<sup>29</sup>

## **Consequences of Governance Failure**

### **39. Poverty and Unemployment**

One of the most visible consequences of governance failure in Nigeria is the persistence of mass poverty and high unemployment rates despite the nation 's vast resource endowments. Poor governance has translated into weak institutions, policy inconsistencies, and mismanagement of oil revenues, all of which have undermined socio-economic development. As of 2022, over 133 million Nigerians were classified as multidimensionally poor, with poverty manifesting not only in low incomes but also in limited access to education, healthcare, clean water, and infrastructure.<sup>30</sup> The youth unemployment crisis is particularly acute; official data from the National Bureau of Statistics indicates that unemployment among young Nigerians (ages 15–34) consistently hovers above 40 percent.<sup>31</sup> This situation creates a cycle of poverty, marginalization, and frustration, which feeds into broader socio-political instability.

### **2. Insecurity and Terrorism**

Governance breakdown has also been a major driver of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria. Weak state institutions, corruption in security agencies, and neglect of marginalized communities have created fertile ground for armed groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, and various bandit militias. Terrorism and violent extremism have devastated lives and communities, particularly in northern Nigeria, where the insurgency

has displaced over two million people and killed tens of thousands since 2009.<sup>32</sup> The inability of successive governments to address root causes such as poverty, unemployment, and ethno-religious grievances has entrenched insecurity as a structural feature of Nigerian society. Moreover, security forces ' heavy-handed approaches, marred by corruption and human rights abuses, have further eroded public trust in state institutions.<sup>33</sup>

### **3. Brain Drain and Human Capital Flight**

Another grave consequence of poor governance is the large-scale emigration of Nigeria 's skilled workforce, commonly referred to as "brain drain." Doctors, engineers, academics, and IT professionals are leaving the country in unprecedented numbers due to limited opportunities, insecurity, and poor working conditions. For example, between 2015 and 2022, more than 15,000 Nigerian doctors were reported to have left for the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, thousands of Nigerian youths have embraced the "japa" phenomenon, seeking better prospects abroad. This loss of human capital undermines development, as the country spends significant resources training professionals who ultimately contribute to the economies of other nations. The exodus also reduces the quality of Nigeria 's healthcare, education, and innovation sectors, leaving the country trapped in cycles of underdevelopment.<sup>35</sup>

#### **4. Loss of Investor Confidence**

Governance failures, including policy inconsistency, corruption, weak judicial institutions, and insecurity, have significantly eroded investor confidence. Nigeria, once seen as a promising investment hub in Africa, now struggles to attract long-term foreign direct investment (FDI). Unpredictable government regulations, multiple taxation regimes, and rampant corruption discourage both domestic and foreign investors.<sup>36</sup> Multinational corporations that once had large operations in Nigeria, such as Michelin and Dunlop, have either scaled down or relocated due to the hostile business environment. Additionally, persistent insecurity — including oil theft in the Niger Delta and banditry in the North — has made investments in agriculture, mining, and energy highly risky. The decline in investor confidence further weakens Nigeria 's ability to generate employment and diversify its economy beyond oil.<sup>37</sup>

#### **5 General Underdevelopment**

Ultimately, the cumulative effect of governance failure is Nigeria 's persistent underdevelopment despite its enormous natural and human resources. Indicators such as infrastructure deficits, high maternal and infant mortality rates, dilapidated schools, and inadequate energy supply illustrate the country 's development stagnation.<sup>38</sup> Nigeria

continues to rank low on the Human Development Index (HDI), reflecting the gap between potential and reality. Corruption, weak institutions, poor leadership, and divisive politics have diverted resources away from public goods provision, entrenching inequality and limiting social mobility. While other countries with similar resource bases have achieved significant economic and social transformation, Nigeria remains trapped in cycles of crisis management rather than long-term planning.<sup>39</sup> In essence, governance failure has translated into a governance-development paradox: a nation rich in resources but poor in outcomes.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **REVAMPING GOVERNANCE – STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE FORUM**

#### **Introduction**

The persistence of governance failures in Nigeria has generated a widespread consensus that reform is both urgent and indispensable. Decades of weak institutions, entrenched corruption, mismanagement of resources, and divisive ethno-religious politics have hindered the country's democratic consolidation and socioeconomic development.<sup>1</sup> From independence in 1960 to the present democratic dispensation, efforts at reform have often been superficial, failing to tackle structural deficits at their roots.<sup>2</sup> This chapter therefore proposes a framework for sustainable governance reform, focusing on institutional strengthening, leadership renewal, anti-corruption mechanisms, economic diversification, electoral integrity, civic engagement, digital governance, and international cooperation.

By identifying realistic strategies grounded in Nigeria's historical realities, the chapter underscores that meaningful reform must be both systemic and participatory in order to produce long-term results.<sup>3</sup>

## **2. Institutional & Leadership Renewal**

Rebuilding the state begins with institutions and the people who run them. In Nigeria the problem has never been only that laws or agencies are missing; it is that formal institutions have been hollowed out by historical legacies, clientelistic politics, and short-termist leadership. The colonial administrative design privileged extractive administration and regional elites; successive military and weak civilian governments then politicized the bureaucracy, hollowed judicial independence, and degraded norms of public service. To change outcomes, we therefore need a two-pronged strategy: (a) structural institutional reform to re-anchor rule-based governance, and (b) leadership renewal to change the incentives and ethical dispositions of officeholders.<sup>4</sup>

For institutions, the judiciary must be prioritized. Judicial independence is not merely symbolic: secure tenure, transparent appointment procedures, adequate and protected financing, improved court administration and case-management systems, and rigorous ethical oversight are all necessary to re-establish the courts as credible arbitrators. Practical steps include empowering an independent judicial service commission with clear, published selection criteria; establishing a guaranteed judicial appropriation mechanism so judges' budgets cannot be weaponized; and rolling out case management

and digitisation to reduce delays and corruption in filings and judgments. Access to justice measures—legal aid, mobile courts, and simplified small-claims processes—will make legal redress real for ordinary citizens and reduce reliance on informal or extra-legal mechanisms.<sup>5</sup>

Security sector and policing reforms deserve sustained attention because governance often terminates at the barrel of a gun. Re-orienting the police from regime protection to community protection involves revising recruitment to reflect local demographics, instituting human-rights training, expanding forensic and investigative capacity, and creating independent civilian oversight bodies with prosecutorial referral power. Community policing pilots—if rigorously evaluated and scaled with safeguards against capture—can rebuild trust and reduce violent confrontation.<sup>7</sup>

Leadership renewal is the human complement to these institutional fixes. It entails reforming political party systems and public appointment practices so that merit and probity, not patronage, matter. Parties must enforce internal democracy—open primaries, transparent candidate vetting, and sanctions for godfatherist behavior—so that political office is not a reward for loyalists but a choice of credible competitors. Public appointment processes (for ministers, agency heads, and central bank officials) should use independent vetting panels, public shortlists, and confirmation hearings to expose credentials and conflicts of interest. Mandatory, verifiable asset declarations and

functioning lifestyle audits—paired with effective whistleblower protection—turn rhetoric about integrity into enforceable expectations.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, building institutions over personalities means redesigning rules and incentives so that governance is resilient to leadership turnover. That requires stronger parliamentary oversight institutions, non-renewable terms for key agency heads, codified handover protocols, and legislative safeguards that limit emergency powers. Popular civic education campaigns, leadership academies for senior public servants, and mentoring programs for youth leaders help cultivate a normative shift: public office as service rather than a revenue stream. If Nigeria can combine these institutional and human reforms, the cycle of short-lived, personality-centred rule can be replaced by longer-horizon, rules-based governance.<sup>9</sup>

### **3. Transparency, Anti-Corruption, and Rule of Law**

Fighting corruption in Nigeria must be systemic — attacking both the supply of discretion and the demand for secrecy. Transparency reduces opportunities for theft; strong enforcement makes theft costly; and the rule of law removes political protection for kleptocrats. Together, these pillars undermine patronage networks, prevent state capture, and restore public confidence.<sup>10</sup>

Start with institutional architecture. The EFCC and ICPC are central to anti-corruption enforcement, yet their independence and credibility have been inconsistent. Reform priorities include secure, merit-based appointment procedures for leadership; guaranteed,

autonomous funding lines; transparent performance indicators; and parliamentary oversight that is not politically selective. Establishing inter-agency case-management protocols (EFCC, ICPC, Attorney-General, and prosecutorial services) reduces case leakage and prevents file-shopping that enables impunity. Additionally, specialised anti-corruption courts with expedited dockets — properly resourced and guarded against undue influence — shorten trial timelines and increase the deterrent effect.<sup>11</sup>

Transparency mechanisms reduce hidden discretion. The Treasury Single Account (TSA) consolidation, when properly implemented, dramatically reduces off-budget accounts and leakages by centralising cash management and enabling real-time reconciliation of receipts and payments. Public procurement reform — mandatory e-procurement platforms, open contracting data standards, and machine-readable tender and award records — diminishes opportunities for bid-rigging and creates an auditable trail. Similarly, legally mandated public disclosure of beneficial ownership for companies bidding for public contracts and holding extractive licenses closes an important channel for offshore looting.<sup>12</sup>

Citizen-facing transparency complements institutional fixes. A robust Freedom of Information (FOI) regime, combined with proactive disclosure policies (budgets, procurement, audit reports), enables civil society and journalists to perform continuous oversight. Whistleblower laws with clear protection clauses and timely reward mechanisms mobilise insiders to expose corruption; but such laws work only when

protections are enforceable and payouts are prompt and transparent. Strengthening legal protection for investigative journalists and enabling secure channels for anonymous reporting are therefore essential.<sup>13</sup>

Tackling elite capture and patronage networks requires reform of the political-finance system. Campaign-finance rules — transparency of donations, caps on spending, public funding tied to compliance — choke the pipelines through which powerful interests buy political protection. Asset-recovery frameworks and improved AML (anti-money-laundering) cooperation with international financial centres are crucial because much stolen wealth is laundered abroad; proactive mutual legal assistance and beneficial-ownership information sharing make recovery feasible. Finally, sequencing matters: begin with transparency interventions (open contracting, TSA) that are harder to reverse and that reduce discretionary rents, then build enforcement capacity, and only thereafter pursue high-profile prosecutions that the institutions can credibly sustain.<sup>14</sup>

In short, success requires an integrated model: independent enforcement institutions, digitised and open public finance systems, legal protections for whistleblowers and the press, political-finance reform, and international legal cooperation. Alone none of these is sufficient; together they shift the political economy away from patronage toward accountable governance. But all of it depends on political will sustained over time and the vigilance of citizens and civil society to prevent backsliding.<sup>15</sup>

#### **4 Economic Diversification & Sustainable Development**

Nigeria's long-term recovery and resilient governance depend crucially on breaking the economy's structural overdependence on crude oil. The oil era created enormous fiscal capacity but also produced two interlocking failures: a mono-commodity fiscal base that leaves the national budget hostage to international price swings, and a political economy in which rents from petroleum distort incentives and reward patronage rather than productive investment. To move from a rentier equilibrium to a diversified, inclusive economy, policy must combine: (a) sectoral revival (agriculture, light manufacturing, ICT, creative industries, renewable energy); (b) macro-fiscal instruments that neutralize boom–bust dynamics; and (c) institutional safeguards that prevent capture of new growth sectors by elites.<sup>16</sup>

Reviving agriculture is both a poverty and industrial strategy. Before oil dominance, Nigeria's cash crops and food exports sustained rural incomes; restoring that comparative advantage requires coordinated investments in rural roads, irrigation, storage and cold-chain infrastructure, input distribution, and extension services that link smallholders to aggregated off-take and agro-processing. Public policy should subsidize public goods (research, extension, infrastructure), not simply subsidize inputs in ways that create rent capture. Agribusiness value chains — from input suppliers to processors and export logistics — must be supported through blended finance windows, contract farming frameworks that protect smallholders, and transparent public procurement that sources locally.<sup>17</sup>

Manufacturing and light industry can be revived via selective, time-bound industrial policy. Rather than blanket protection, Nigeria needs “smart” interventions: export credits for labour-intensive manufacturers, localized supplier development programs, and special economic zones (SEZs) that cluster firms around reliable power, transport, and customs facilitation. Local content rules should be accompanied by capacity building and technology transfer obligations so that local firms graduate from assembly to component manufacture, reducing import dependence and creating jobs. Complementary policies — predictable tariffs, streamlined logistics, and improved customs procedures — are essential to reduce the cost of doing business.<sup>18</sup>

The services and digital sectors (fintech, creative industries, professional services) are low-capital, high-employment opportunities especially attractive to Nigeria’s youth. Bold support for broadband rollout, vocational training in digital skills, regulatory sandboxes for fintech, and intellectual property protections for creative content can scale industries such as Nollywood and Afrobeats into larger export earners. Government should prioritize reducing barriers to start-ups (business registration, access to credit via movable collateral registries) and encourage diaspora investment through diaspora bonds and targeted investment windows.<sup>19</sup>

Renewable energy and off-grid power solutions are strategic for industrialization and rural development. Mini-grid and pay-as-you-go solar models can unlock productive use of electricity for agro-processing and small manufacturing, while national policy should

incentivize local assembly of renewable components and skills development for maintenance and operation. A visible industrial electrification plan reduces the risk that high energy costs will continue to choke nascent manufacturing.<sup>20</sup>

Macro-fiscal policy must manage resource volatility and curb Dutch Disease. A credible fiscal rule that channels a defined share of windfalls into a stabilization/savings vehicle (strengthening the NSIA or a reinforced sovereign wealth fund with transparent governance) smooths spending and prevents excessive real exchange appreciation. Exchange-rate flexibility, together with targeted export incentives for tradable sectors, helps maintain competitiveness. Tax reform that broadens the domestic revenue base (improved VAT collection, property taxes, formalization incentives) reduces the fiscal premium on oil rents and strengthens the accountability link between taxpayers and government.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, diversification is inherently political: new markets and subsidies can be captured by incumbents. Anti-capture measures are therefore non-negotiable — open contracting, beneficial ownership disclosure for investors and concessionaires, competitive public procurement, and independent monitoring of strategic industrial projects. Sequencing is important: begin with public goods investments and regulatory clarity (infrastructure, power, land tenure), then unlock private finance and scale production, while simultaneously tightening transparency mechanisms to deter elite capture. Where these

elements are combined, resource-rich countries (with adapted models) have managed to diversify effectively.<sup>22</sup>

## **5 Democratic Deepening & Civic Engagement**

Sustainable governance requires that political authority be anchored in representative legitimacy and active citizenship. Strengthening democracy in Nigeria therefore demands reforms that make elections credible, political parties more accountable and internally democratic, and civil society and youth more meaningfully included in governance processes. The objective is not merely to hold better elections but to create a virtuous feedback loop in which citizens can influence policy, hold leaders to account, and replace rulers without violence or subversion.<sup>23</sup>

Electoral integrity is central. INEC's operational independence must be protected through secure, multi-year funding that is insulated from executive discretion, professionalized staffing, and transparent procurement for sensitive election materials. Technological improvements (biometric registration, Bimodal Voter Accreditation System — BVAS, and electronic collation) reduce opportunities for manual manipulation, but technology alone is insufficient: robust chain-of-custody procedures, contingency planning for insecure regions, and independent audits of election technology vendors are essential to build trust. Equally important are fast, credible electoral dispute resolution mechanisms — specialized electoral tribunals with time-bound case processing that prevent protracted litigations from undermining electoral legitimacy.<sup>24</sup>

Political party reform is often neglected but is a linchpin for democratic deepening. Parties must internalize democracy through enforced primaries, transparent candidate nominations, and sanctions for money-driven impositions. Campaign finance regulation — mandatory disclosure of donors, spending caps, and public financing for qualifying parties — reduces the corrosive influence of private money, though enforcement capacity must be built at the same time. Strengthening party institutions also means investing in ideational competition: policy platforms, legislative training for party caucuses, and civic engagement so that parties are judged on programmatic merits rather than patronage networks.<sup>25</sup>

Civic space and active participation must be expanded, especially for youth and women. Legislative measures such as temporary quotas, campaign finance subsidies for female candidates, and youth candidate support schemes (campaign grants, training, mentorship) reduce barriers to entry. The Not Too Young To Run law was a necessary step, but financial, organizational, and cultural barriers remain. Civil society organisations, media, and academia should be supported to run non-partisan voter education, candidate debates, and community scorecards that track public officials' performance. Digital platforms can mobilize and inform, but must be complemented by offline civic education to reach marginalised and rural populations.<sup>26</sup>

Combatting voter apathy requires both supply- and demand-side measures. On the supply side: reduce the cost and risks of voting (polling accessibility, secure voting environments,

simplified voter registration). On the demand side: expand civic education in schools, incentivize local participatory budgeting pilots that show citizens the link between votes and service delivery, and support youth-led policy incubators that channel energy into constructive policy engagement rather than episodic protest. Turning passive electorates into active citizens is a long-term project but essential for democratic resilience.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, the international community and domestic actors should build a system of credible observation, but not externalization: external observers can deter blatant fraud and offer technical assistance, yet democratic consolidation depends on internal actors — parties, courts, media, CSOs and voters — accepting and enforcing democratic norms. When electoral reform, party reform, and civic inclusion act together, elections become not just contests for office but instruments of accountability and policy choice.<sup>28</sup>

In conclusion, this section has presented a comprehensive roadmap for revamping governance in Nigeria, emphasizing institutional renewal, ethical leadership, anti-corruption measures, economic diversification, democratic deepening, technological innovation, and international cooperation. While these reforms offer practical pathways toward sustainable development, their success ultimately hinges on political will, active citizen participation, and resilience against entrenched elite interests. Taken together, these strategies show that Nigeria's transformation is achievable if reforms are pursued with consistency, inclusivity, and accountability.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this topic brings together the central arguments and findings of the study on Revamping Nigeria from the Shackles of Bad Governance. It serves as the final stage of the research by summarizing insights gathered from the preceding chapters, drawing overarching conclusions, and presenting practical recommendations for reform. The chapter also proposes directions for future research that can further advance knowledge and practical solutions in the field of governance and development in Nigeria.

## Study overview

The study concludes that Nigeria's governance problems are systemic rather than isolated. They stem from a complex interaction of historical legacies, weak institutions, corruption, poor leadership, and external pressures.<sup>1</sup> Without deliberate reform, the cycle of underdevelopment, insecurity, and instability will continue to undermine the country's democratic and developmental aspirations. Nevertheless, with strong political will, robust institutions, and sustained citizen engagement, Nigeria can reverse its governance decline and embark on a path of inclusive and sustainable development. The path forward requires bold reforms across political, economic, legal, social, and international dimensions.

## Key Findings

The study revealed several critical insights into the nature and consequences of bad governance in Nigeria:

**1. Historical Foundations of Bad Governance:** The legacies of colonial administration and the authoritarian structures inherited at independence created a fragile political culture that nurtured weak institutions and fostered corruption.

**2. Governance Failures and Consequences:** Nigeria's governance decline is marked by persistent corruption, overdependence on oil revenues, weak state institutions, electoral malpractice, and the manipulation of ethnic and religious divisions. These failures have led to widespread poverty, unemployment, and insecurity, thereby eroding trust in the government.

**3. Institutional and Legal Weaknesses:** The study found that the inefficiency of Nigeria's public institutions, coupled with selective application of the rule of law, undermines accountability and transparency.

**4. Social and Civic Challenges:** Poor civic education, a culture of impunity, and weak citizen engagement have deepened governance challenges, leaving citizens disempowered in demanding accountability from leaders.

**5. External Influences:** Nigeria's integration into the global economy has exposed the country to external pressures—ranging from conditional loans to trade imbalances—that have often reinforced internal governance weaknesses rather than resolving them.

**6. Opportunities for Reform:** Despite these challenges, the research emphasized that opportunities exist for reform through political restructuring, economic diversification, institutional strengthening, social reorientation, and international cooperation.

## **Revamping Nigeria from the Shackles of Bad Governance**

The central concern of this research—the need to revamp Nigeria from the shackles of bad governance—emerges most clearly when the country’s governance trajectory is examined against its enormous potential. With vast human and natural resources, Nigeria was expected at independence to emerge as a continental leader. Instead, systemic corruption, institutional weakness, and ethno-regional politics have locked the state into a cycle of crisis. To revamp Nigeria, reforms must therefore be holistic, consistent, and grounded in inclusivity.

Central to this is the renewal of leadership and the strengthening of institutions. As the study revealed, governance in Nigeria has often been personified, with leaders wielding unchecked power while institutions remain weak. Reversing this trend requires prioritizing rule-based governance over personality-based politics. Similarly, economic restructuring must break the rentier logic of oil dependence by promoting diversification into agriculture, ICT, renewable energy, and manufacturing. Only by broadening its economic base can Nigeria escape the vulnerability of fluctuating oil revenues.

Furthermore, combating corruption remains pivotal. Without credible accountability, reform will remain cosmetic. This requires not only strengthening anti-corruption agencies but also transforming the political culture that normalizes impunity. Revamping governance also entails harnessing Nigeria’s demographic advantage by empowering

youth and women, promoting civic education, and embedding democratic values in everyday political practice.

Finally, revamping Nigeria cannot occur in isolation. International partnerships—whether with ECOWAS, the African Union, or global institutions — must be pursued not as dependencies but as platforms for mutual learning and resource mobilization. Lessons from countries like Botswana and Malaysia, which turned resource wealth into development, provide practical examples Nigeria can adapt to its context.

### **Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings, this study recommends a sustained reform process that cuts across the political, economic, institutional, and social spheres. Politically, Nigeria must strengthen its democratic foundations by ensuring credible elections, reforming political party systems, and creating space for inclusive participation. Such reforms will help restore legitimacy and rebuild citizens’ trust in governance.

Economically, deliberate diversification away from oil is essential. Investing in agriculture, ICT, renewable energy, and industrialization will not only reduce vulnerability to external shocks but also create jobs and stimulate inclusive growth. Fiscal transparency and accountability in the use of public resources must also be institutionalized to prevent rent-seeking and wastage.

Institutionally, reform must prioritize the independence of the judiciary and the professionalization of the civil service. Anti-corruption agencies should be empowered with both autonomy and resources, while bureaucratic processes should be digitalized to reduce inefficiency and opportunities for graft.

Socially, Nigeria needs a new civic orientation. Expanding civic education, reforming the education curriculum to prioritize ethics and leadership, and promoting active citizen participation are necessary steps toward embedding accountability. Empowering women and youth must be seen not as symbolic gestures but as integral to governance renewal.

Internationally, Nigeria must approach partnerships strategically. Loans and aid should be negotiated in ways that prioritize domestic ownership and sustainability, while best practices from reforming states must be contextualized to local realities. International cooperation should also extend to regional challenges such as terrorism, migration, and climate change, which require collective responses.

Ultimately, the research highlight that Nigeria' s liberation from the shackles of bad governance depends not only on visionary policies but also on the consistency, inclusivity, and accountability with which they are pursued.

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Ebuwa, S.	64	Teacher	Benin City	July 13 <sup>th</sup> 2025
Obazee, K.	30	Businessman	Benin City	July 9 <sup>th</sup> 2025
Omoruyi, I.	40	Businessman	Benin City	July 12 <sup>th</sup> 2025
Osemwegie, O.	34	Trader	Benin City	August 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2025
Osagie, I.	30	Businessman	Benin City	July 15 <sup>th</sup> 2025
Okungbowa, O.	54	Farmer	Benin City	July 28 <sup>th</sup> 2025
Pa Osayande	65	Retired Teacher	Benin City	August 1 <sup>st</sup> 2025

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