Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.4 No.1 March, 2021; p.g. 137 – 146; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND THE CHALLENGES OF NATION-BUILDING IN NIGERIA: A DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates the nexus between good governance and building-nation particularly the challenges that have hindered sustainable building-nation since 1999. It argues that good governance is all about transparency and accountability in allocating authoritative resources. And as such, internalizing the culture of good governance is the recipe for quality leadership aim at building-nation in every levels of government in the country. The paper argues that when good governance is entrenched, the recurrent pathological problems of corruption, primordial sentiment, patron-client politics, the unholy marriage of Nigeria and ethno-religious loyalty that many scholars have identified as the challenges of nation-building in the country would be resolved. In other words, this paper sees the challenges of Nigeria's nation-building with a monolithic perspective by attributing it to the absence of good governance in Nigerian political culture differently from the multiplicity perspectives of previous studies. While the paper is manly qualitative, it submits that the internationalization and institutionalization of the virtues of good governance is the essential recipe for sustainable nation-building.

Keywords: Democracy, Governance, Nation- building, Challenges, Leadership.

Introduction

When good governance is entrenched, the recurrent pathological problems of corruption, primordial sentiment, patron-client politics, the unholy marriage of Nigeria and ethno-religious loyalty that many scholars have identified as the challenges of nation-building in the country would be resolved (Adejumobi,2004, UNDP,2014, Okpaga,2003, and Ake, 2001). In other words, this paper sees the challenges of Nigeria's nation-building with a monolithic perspective by attributing it to the absence of good governance in Nigerian political culture differently from the multiplicity perspectives of previous studies such as Adejumobi (2004),UNDP(2014), Okpaga (2003) and Ake (2001).

As a result, how to entrench the culture of good governance towards nation-building has been the major preoccupation of public discourse among Nigerians since independence in 1960. This clarion call has become imperative as the leadership spectrum under the present democratic dispensation has not satisfactory demonstrated the desire political will capable of enhancing sustainable nation-building. The failure of successive regimes to internalize the culture of good governance has thus, been left in a poor state of nation-building characterized by endemic corruption at all levels of government and society; excruciating pains of poverty and hopelessness; insecurity, high rate of unemployment and youth restiveness; kidnapping and armed robbery; religious extremism; infrastructural deficits; inflation and among others. Despite the growing of these ills those in positions of authority have remained indifferent to the plight of the Nigerian mass, instead they are obsessed with siphoning the fortunes of the country.

The desired path to nation-building of the country is still a mirage in spite of the abundance of human and material resources, which should have ordinarily translated into a buoyant life for the citizenry. The greatest threat to nation-building in Nigeria has thus been poor leadership, which is an indication of bad governance. Since the return of democratic governance in 1999, Nigeria has been experiencing deepening political crises as a result of the defects of the democratization process and the apparent ineptitude of the political leadership. The problem of leadership has continued to abort efforts at genuine democratization through exclusion of some segments of the political elite from effective participation in the politics of the country. But Fayemi (2009) viewed the issue differently. To him, the long years of military dictatorships since the country's political independence has left the nation politically de-mobilized, humanly underdeveloped and economically sterile with an ample population ravaged by poverty. He attributed the quagmires of sustainable nation-building in Nigeria to the prolong military. However, Fayemi (2009) did not interrogated vested pyramid of literature to demonstrate whether the return to democratic rule in the country in 1999 has entrenched a new wave of political leadership and democratic governance would accelerate the tide of nation-building. Thus, this premise is indeed a gap in his study.

To this end, while previous studies (Adejumobi,2004; UNDP,2014; Okpaga,2003; Okpaga, 2003; and Ake, 2001) have specifically identified corruption, primordial sentiment, patron-client politics, the unholy marriage of Nigeria and ethno-religious loyalty as the challenges of nation-building, this paper has differently identify the inability of the Nigerian State to internalize the culture of good governance as the major challenge of nation-building in Nigerian. This is because the good governance is capable of resolving the above problems that have dominated public discourse over the years. This angle is necessary for interrogation because the process of internalizing the culture of good governance is deeply rooted in the quality of leadership and as such the unwillingness of the political elite in the country to provide quality leadership has been the major reason for the slow pace of nation-building of the Nigerian state. Thus, it is against the aforementioned problematic premise that this paper seek to demonstrate how the inherent attributes of good governance could serve as a recipe for the actualization of the quest for nation-building of the Nigerian state. And the failure of the political elites to internalize the overriding culture of good governance has equally resulted to other silent issues revolving around poor leadership that have frustrated the pursuit of nation-building since 1999.

Conceptual Underpinnings

Adejumobi (2004) sees governance as the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs. This implies that governance encompasses the state's institutional and structural arrangements, decision-Making processes and implementation capacity, and the relationship between government officials and the public. This connation by Adejumobi (2004) views governance mainly from the structurally perspective which is macro in nature by neglecting the micro issues to governance. Differently, The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (1999) conceptualizes governance as a process of social arrangement between the rulers and the ruled in a political community. While this conceptualization is micro in nature and it equally emphasis on component parts are which include rule making and standard setting, management of regime structures and outcome and results of the social pact.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1997) view of governance is encompasses. It describes governance as the totality of the exercise of authority in the management of a country's affairs, comprising of the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and mediate their differences. This conceptualization entails that governance denotes how people are ruled and how the affairs of the state are administered and regulated. Governance, therefore, refers to a nation's system of politics and how this functions in relation to public administration and law. The notion of good governance is derived from governance. Governance can be regarded as good when it has the basic elements of what makes a system acceptable to the generality of the people. These elements include freedom, accountability, and popular participation, among others. This is why Okpaga (2009) sees good governance as the process through which a state's affairs are managed effectively in the area of public accountability, responsiveness and transparency. To him, the system must be in the interest of the governed and the rulers. This notion means that any government that is not for the interest of the ruled is an aberration. It is on this basis that Mohideen (1994) posits that governance becomes "good" when it is operated in accordance with legal and ethical principles as conceived by society. Implicit in the definition is the identification of the functional elements of good governance, which are the operational variables by which it can be achieved and sustained. These include accountability, transparency, rule of law, freedom of expression and association, electoral legitimacy, among others.

From the above views, good governance can be conceptualized as the making and implementation of policies that would impact positively on the citizens of the country. This is what Ake (2003) meant by bringing public policy in alignment with social needs. The term good governance was first used by donor agencies in the 1980s by the international monetary fund (IMF) and the World Bank. It is a stick and carrot instrument being used by the IMF for keeping in line errant developing countries that must match their request for aid with good behaviour. This implies that countries with satisfactory record of good governance could count on the international monetary fund and the World Bank for aid. On the contrary, those countries that have performed poorly in good governance, must improve to qualify for adequate support.

Moral obligation however, is normally felt with particular force inside national groups to which people belong and with which they identify. Concern with the needs of others and poorer nations is the expression of a new fundamental aspect of modern age, the awareness

that we live in a village world (globalization).It is this, which makes the desire to help, into more than a moral impulse felt by an individual: makes it into a political and social imperative for governments, which now accepts at least a degree of accountability in their relations with each other. It is a recognition that concern with improvement of the human condition, is no longer divisible. 'If the rich countries try to make it so, if they concentrate on the elimination of poverty and backwardness at home and ignore them abroad, what would happen to the principles by which they seem to live? Could the moral and social foundations of their own societies remain firm and steady if they washed their hands off the plight of others?(Ake,2001). However, there is a consensus good governance brings about nation building.

This is why Eleazu (2005) contends that nation building is the process of politically socializing the people into becoming good citizens of the political order and making the citizens feel they have a stake in the community worth fighting for. This notion implies that nation building is a process of mobilizing available resources, human, and materials and financial, for socio-economic and political developments of a given nation state. Meanwhile, Eleazu's (2005) notion of nation-building did not clarify whether it was the desire to establish and build the Nigerian nation that led to the nationalist struggle. This is because nation building involves the transformation of existing structures through the collective efforts of the citizens of state. Indeed good governance is a means to an end to attaining nation building. Nation building entails proposals designed to bring about long term political stability, rapid economic development and visible social justice. Conceptually, while good governance is considered as a means to an end in the attainment of nation–building, nation-building is not feasible without internalizing the virtue of good governance. In other words, while good governance is a dependent variable, nation-building is an independent variable. As a result, political actors in any political system could manipulate the culture of good governance for or against nation-building. Thus, the next section of the paper interrogates trajectory on good governance in Nigeria since 1999.

Good Governance and Nation-Building in Nigeria since 1999

With the return of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999 otherwise known as the "Fourth Republic", the people have expected with great enthusiasm that the new political leadership and democratic governance would bring about rapid development in all facets of the Nigerian society. It was thus, expected that the political leadership would address the critical socio-economic and political problems bedeviling the country such as poverty; insecurity; unemployment; corruption; poor governance; among others. However, twenty years into the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, the extent to which these problems have been addressed as a means towards deepening democracy; instituting good governance; and fast-tracking the country's development remains a matter of opinion. Under democratic governance, Nigerians expect certain minimum dividends from the government, which include steady electricity supply; good health-care services; employment for its teeming youths; reduction in mass poverty; access to qualitative education; improved infrastructure; security of lives and property; general well-being of citizens; among others.

However, the nearly two decades and half of un-interrupted democracy in the country has been that of untold hardship, pains, increased poverty and squalor, unprecedented insecurity, preventable and rampant killings of innocent people and corruption. Democracy in Nigeria has only succeeded in worsening the conditions of poor citizens due to the greed and

selfishness of the leadership (Desert Herald Special Report, 2016; Fayemi, 2009; Okau, 2014; Ekpu, 2010). Consequently, these studies did not emphasis whether the primary interest of the political leadership is not service but the accumulation of the nation's wealth. This is because there are evidences indicating that the insecurity situation, armed robbery, kidnapping and other evil menaces in the country emanated from corruption induced poverty, a situation where the wealth of the nation finds its way into the foreign accounts of few individuals who are in the corridors of power.

Good governance epitomizes selflessness, transparent and accountability in a political system. The absence of internationalization of the virtue of good governance in Nigerian political culture frustrates the pursuit for nation-building. This submission invariably is in accordance with UNDP's (1997) notion of nation-building. The ingredients for nation-building to UNDP (1997) include but not limited to: (a) the installation of competent and accountable administrative machinery; and the end of arbitrariness and the use of public office for private gains;(b) the putting in place of effective constitutional and procedural checks and balances in the exercise of state power; (c) the nurturing and respect for a free and independent judiciary; and (d) the creation of an environment conducive for business and foreign investment; and (e) the commencement of the drive for a higher standard of living for the people and drastic reduction in the levels of poverty and corruption.

However, these expectations had remained mere dreams. It has been alleged that the fight against corruption in Nigeria has been widely selective and geared towards dealing with perceived enemies than reducing the real corruption, hence corrupt behavior has continued unabated among officers in government (Genyi-Gorge, 2016).Corrupt political behaviour persist in a political system has no value for good governance enhance the good governance alone is a cure for all manners of socio-economic lilies. Thus, Genyi-Gorge's (2016) view is reductionist of the quagmire to a micro unit this is because corruption and other unethical political behaviour are recipes for bad governance. Though Genyi-Gorge (2016), admits that corruption directs resources from the poor to the rich. In spite of this submission, she still reduces the crisis of Nigeria's nation-building to corruption of which corruption itself is a recipe of bad governance which in turn implies the absence of good governance.

It is worrisome to note that Nigeria's political independence had not brought substantial change in the economic conditions and people's general development. As Fayemi (2009) rightly observed, 'the standard of living in Nigeria is deteriorating on a daily basis as high unemployment, inflation, civil strife, poverty, corruption, disease, malnutrition, illiteracy, insecurity of lives and property, among others appeared to be the only legacy the state is capable of passing from one generation to the other (Okau,2014). The most critical question that any patriotic Nigerian might be asking today is why has the country not developed or is not developing as fast as it should? As Okau (2014) noted, while answers to this question may vary from group to group and individual to individual, some answers are so strong that they are rarely controvertible. In this respect, the problem of leadership is a good example.

The emergent political leadership of the post-independence Nigeria has shown a disappointing incapacity to manage the affairs of the country. The citizens are feeling thoroughly embarrassed and disappointed by the turn of events because of unfulfilled expectations and dashed hopes. The people are facing economic hardship of the highest order

despite the enormous national resources with which the country has been endowed. Nigeria's celebrated economic growth has not translated into better economic and social welfare for Nigerians. Thus, poverty reduction and job creation have not kept pace with the population growth, which implies social distress for an increasing number of the people. Poor leadership has succeeded in putting Nigeria and its over 160 million people into political and economic impasse. It is rather unbelievable that since the return of democracy in 1999, the country could not consolidate the democratization process to achieve good governance and usher Nigerians into the land of goodies. In most parts of the country today, millions of human inhabitants share water from the same source with animals; water infested with bacteria and viruses.

Nigeria is poorly governed, hence her failure to rise to the height of its potentials. According to Achebe, the 'country's embarrassing stunted growth despite its enormous human and material resources is the product of the failure of leadership' (Ekpu, 2010). The thesis focused on leaders, elected or non-elected, making their society well-grounded with the facts of history. The people or followers feed on the energy of their leaders to rise to their individual potentials; the full flowering of which fuel national development. Leaders are the engines of national development. This shows the critical role of leadership. It has been argued in this paper that the reason why Nigeria has failed to internalize true democratic culture; good governance; and nation-building, in terms of the general well-being of the larger majority of its population 18 years (1999-2017) after an uninterrupted civilian rule is bad leadership.

Indeed, Nigerians are unanimous on the verdict that the country has not fulfilled its potentials despite her enormous natural endowment in both human and material resources, hence the people's realities are far from their ideals; and all the accusing fingers for this paradox point to the quality of leadership. This makes the search for the underlying causes of the phenomenon of leadership failure in Nigeria a compelling endeavor. The causes of leadership failure in Nigeria include the following:

(i) Constitutional Provision: The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Section 131 provides four qualifications for the office of the President as follows:

(a) He must be a citizen of Nigeria by birth;
(b) He must attain the age of 40 years;
(c) He must be a member of a political party and is sponsored by that political party; and
(d) He must be educated up to at least school certificate level or its equivalent.25

The issues of citizenship and political party affiliation are not debatable but certainly age and educational qualifications are. As Nigeria searches for a leader, what should count are people with a gift of the head and gift of the heart; brilliant and hardworking people with uncommon traits of selflessness and sacrificial service to humanity. These qualities have nothing to do with age. The constitution provides for school certificate level education for an aspirant to the high office of President. At this time of great complexity in world affairs, if our entry qualification for the most important office in the land is this low, how can we expect a high level achievement from the occupant since higher education is part of the preparations for a high office. According to Ekpu,(2010,p.4) 'no school certificate holder today can be the managing director of a bank or the manager of a high grade restaurant in Nigeria, or driver at national Agency for the control of AIDs'. Yet we have school certificate as the qualification for the most important office in the land at a time of great complexity, in world affairs.

(ii) Ethnicity: Ethnicity is a major obstacle to the development of effective leadership in Nigeria. The country is bedeviled by crisis of governance, which include the conduct of governance within an ethnic framework. Ethnic politics in the country has reduced faith in the unity of the Nigerian state to protect all citizens. As a result of this, 'ruling parties are tailored to serve tribal and ethnic cleavages with either the dominant tribal group or an acceptable tribal group used as a balance' (Achebe, 2012, p.34). The natural consequence is intensified tribal and ethnic rivalries based on deep-seated suspicion of the opposing ethnic groups. The ethnic minorities in Nigeria offer lucid examples. The political class in Nigeria scarifies national economic objectives on the altar of ethnicity. These are at variance with the fundamental objective and directive principles of state policy.

(iii) Accidental Political Leaders: It is argued that no elected President of Nigeria since independence was ever prepared for the job. Hence, many of them had not the faintest idea about the nature and essence of political leadership because they were without exemption ill-prepared. This is the bane of the country's progress. No elected President of Nigeria was ever prepared for the job. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was not ready but was pushed by Ahmadu Bello to come to Lagos while he tended the shop in Kaduna. Shehu Shagari wanted to go for the Senate but the National Party of Nigeria's Kingmakers diverted him to Dodan Barracks. Olusegun Obasanjo was still in prison when godfathers pulled him out of the dungeon and put the crown on his head amidst a mild protest, "what did I forget there?" Umar Musa Yar'adua was heading to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria for a teaching job when Obasanjo halted and wheeled him to Aso Rock. Goodluck Jonathan was just adjusting his seat as the Governor of Bayelsa state when Obasanjo called him to higher duties as Vice-President to Yar'Adua. As Yar'Adua's health failed, luck smiled on Jonathan and he became what he was not ready for; president' (Igwe, 2016, p.36). It becomes obvious therefore, that no one among the presidents spent years dreaming, studying, working, researching and networking in readiness for the post of Nigeria's president. It is thus not surprising if none of them turned out to be a peak performer. Thus, Nigeria has over the years since the country's political independence, been saddled with leaders who were neither properly equipped nor even ready for the job and thereby refuses to internalize the good governance and thus, the absence of good governance resulting to the under listed lilies in the Nigerian political system:

(iv) Personalization of Public Office: One of the greatest un-doing of the Nigerian leadership is the tendency to personalize public projects. They initiate a vision and leave office with it, which is detrimental to national development. The challenge of leadership also creates the problem of policy summersault whereby policies are not allowed to mature as they are changed and countered arbitrarily. An example of this, according to Mark, was when Obasanjo sold refineries in Nigeria to Chinese investors, which was upturned a year later by Yar'Adua (Okau,2014). It is evident in Nigeria that every new administration comes in with its own programmes and completely jettisons whatever was on the ground notwithstanding the status of such programmes. It is worst when the new government belongs to a different political party. This accounts for the numerous abandoned projects that littered the entire landscape of the country.

(v) Corruption: Nigeria is a nation favoured by providence. The vast human and material wealth with which she is endowed bestows on her a role in Africa and the world, which no one else can assume or fulfill. However, successive leaders in the country have regrettably

betrayed irretrievably the country's high destiny. Achebe lamented over this situation when he said: 'The countless billions that a generous providence poured into our national coffers in the last ten years (1979-82) would have been enough to launch this nation into the middle-rank of developed nations and transformed the lives of our poor and needy (Okau,2014). However, because we lacked the right leadership to manage such resources for the general good of the people, they were simply looted and stolen including squandering on uncontrolled importation of all kinds of useless consumer goods; inflated contracts to an increasing army of party loyalists who had neither the desire nor the competence to execute such contracts; as well as escalating salaries of grossly over-staffed and un-productive public service.

The trouble with the Nigerian state is leadership. The country lacks the leadership that would institute policies by which to engender the development of the nation. The people live in want of functional hospitals, roads, electricity, affordable shelter, schools, etc. As Igwe (2016,p.39) observed: 'funds meant for public welfare have been hijacked by the leadership and are sitting in Swiss Banks denying the poor the chance to escape poverty and forcing the best Nigerian brains (emphasis mine) to seek greener pastures abroad. Millions of others die from starvation, hunger, malnutrition, polio, measles, tuberculosis and other killer diseases. The crime of those who die and those who continued to suffer and who are denied opportunity to escape poverty is that they happened to have come under corrupt and incompetent leaders'. Majority of Nigerian leaders since independence, short of rhetorics, have variously shown they have no interest in the future of the country. All Nigeria has to live with are leaders who by some illegal means or the other acquired power, emptied the nation's coffers and restart the same process by working towards re-election and where this is not possible, transfer power to their cronies who venture to do worse than their predecessors. They recycled themselves within the corridors of power.

Thus, to all intents and purposes, Nigeria is a country of failed political leadership, which has betrayed its citizens. According to Okau (2014,p.6), 'one major characteristics of African Political leaders including Nigeria has to do with "Kleptocracy", which he explained thus: The Greek roots of this word are "thief" and "rule" i.e. rule by thievery.' It was coined by an observer of a Latin American dictator who pilfered on a grand scale. In Africa, the description was regularly applied to the government of President Mobutu of Zaire. …Mobutu treated the national treasury as his personal account, drawing cash whenever he decided to buy another villa in Europe… or to fly with the national airline to France for a haircut. The situation in Zaire during Mobutu's era has a lot of similarities with the events in Nigeria since the country's political independence. For instance, late General Sani Abacha had during his presidency, 1993-1998, stolen N 78 billion, stashed in banks around the world. According to Leslie Caldwell, US Assistant Attorney General quoted by Reuters, rather than serve his country, General Abacha used his public office in Nigeria to loot millions of dollars, engaging in brazen acts of kleptocracy (Okau, 2014). The most critical challenge of the Nigerian nation today therefore, is bad leadership. Arising from such monumental corruption and decay occasioned by the absence of good leadership, Achebe (2012) decried Nigeria's loss of the 20th century and wondered if the 21st century would be allowed to follow suit.

(vi) **The Role of Followership:** There are no leaders without followers. In both theory and practice in a democracy, leaders lead with the consent of their followers, this is obtained

through the instrumentality of the ballot paper. It follows therefore, that the followers deserve the leaders they get because they are or supposed to be instrumental to the emergence of the leaders. It is however, tempting to hold a leader entirely responsible when things go wrong but such temptation needs to be moderated by the fact that the followership have critical role to play in the success or failure of their leader. One of the critical roles the followership play is the right to act as the watch dog of the leadership. The followership abdicates that role by its uncritical acceptance of whatever the leader does. A critical followership is alive to its watch dog responsibility, which creates an atmosphere that prevents a democratic leader from turning himself into an autocratic leader and even an autocratic from turning himself into a god. Docile followership, on the other hand, is passive and has no stomach to question the leadership or hold him accountable for his deeds. As Agbese (2010) asserted, docile followership is a fertile ground for poor and failed leadership.

Generally, enlightened societies have critical followership, hence on the average; have better and more committed leadership. However, unenlightened societies such as Nigeria have docile followership and tend on the average to have poor leadership. Nigeria has therefore, continued to face the constant challenge of good leadership. Docile followership according to Agbese (2010) is a consequence of illiteracy and poverty. The education of the citizenry is the sure road to critical followership. This is because education exposes the followership to their rights and responsibilities including the rights and obligation of the leadership to the people. Poverty and illiteracy, on the other hand, foster the culture of dependence, which in turn fosters the culture of benevolence. The culture of benevolence is anathema to the culture of accountability because in such a culture, people do not feel it is their right to question the behavior of the benefactors or the source of their generosity. The culture of benevolence breeds followers whom according to Agbese (2010) cannot confront their leaders but eulogize and collaborate with those who visit bad leadership on them. Nigeria is unfortunately saddled with the twin burden of illiteracy and abject poverty, which have created fertile ground for poor leadership. This is because under conditions of mass illiteracy and dehumanizing poverty, the ability of Nigerians to demand accountability from their leaders are seriously weakened if not entirely denied.

Concluding Remarks

This paper principally examined how the absence of good governance has confronted the quest for nation-building in the country. It has evidently demonstrated that transparence and accountability are attributes of good governance and they have the essential ingredients to lead the country to the right path of nation-building. In Other words, the central argument of the paper is rooted in the agitation for internalization of the culture of good governance in all levels of government. When good governance is to be entrenched, the recurrent pathological problems of corruption, primordial sentiment, patron-client politics, the unholy marriage of Nigeria and ethno-religious loyalty that many scholars and analyst have identified as the challenges of nation-building in the country would be resolved. For the reason that the principles of transparence and accountability are all about using instrumentalities of government to formulate policies and programmes that would be people-oriented.

For the way forward, Nigerians are what they are today only because their leaders are not what they should be. According to Obasanjo (1994,p.34) other nations whose levels of material poverty were similar to ours at independence and which are less endowed in resources have

made greater strides because they were better led politically. The situation has not change after twenty year of democratic government. It is therefore, obvious that positive leadership represents Nigeria's oasis of hope for greatness in a desert of mediocrities, purposeless, corrupt and visionless men and women masquerading as leaders at all levels of governance in the country. Given this reality, the paper recommends that the various underlying causes of leadership failure in Nigeria, which have remained obstacles to the country's quest for true good governance; and nation-building, must be addressed with the seriousness and urgency they deserve. This will allow for the emergence of a positive leadership that would not compromise the national quest for improved welfare for the citizens; social infrastructures, human development; and technological breakthrough, which are the dividends of democracy through the internalization of the culture of good governance. And as such, good governance should be seen as a means to an end in the attainment of nation-building.

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