



## END BAD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION

**DR. ADELEYE, Joseph Olusola**

Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti.  
09112657556 adeleye.joseph@bouesti.edu.ng

### **Abstract**

*If Philosophy is the study of all the existence, then the study beams its searchlight at the rationale behind the popular slogan in Nigeria 'end bad government'. Poverty, impurity in governance and insecurity are prevalent in Nigeria presently, the existence of suffering and hunger is on the high side. These, the masses attributed to the emergence of the bad governance led by the current Nigeria government headed by Bola Ahmed Tinubu. One may ask if patriotism prevents citizens from protesting to demand for their alienable rights in the face of suffering while the leaders either elected or appointed both at national and state levels amass wealth of the nation for only their immediate families and cronies. The paper investigates if at this hard period in Nigeria the citizens have any moral justification to press for the better condition of their existence or to accept the slogan of the present government 'elofokanbale' meaning be patient. Also, the paper examines why most the citizens protesting for better condition of living were sometime killed, insulted and possibly raped among others by the security agents that are supposed to protect lives and property? These and other investigations will guide us as this paper rationalizes the experience of Nigerians before, during and after the protest against the bad governance in Nigeria.*

**Keyword:** Governance, End, Bad Governance, Philosophy, Investigation.

### **Introduction**

Aristotle characterised good governance as a system that prioritises the common benefit and happiness of the populace, whereas a poor governance model, as evidenced in contemporary Nigeria, is perceived as one where rulers act for their own private and selfish interests. Effective administration fosters the cultivation of virtues that promote the common good while minimising the focus on wealth, hence facilitating the emergence of a desirable middle class. This is a governmental structure wherein the middle class, including educators, civil workers, bankers, clerics, and others dedicated to the public welfare, possess the means to provide for themselves and their immediate families. Aristotle characterises democracy as a system in which power resides with the populace. Individuals have the option to elect those who will wield authority. For instance, Nigeria is a democracy in which the populace is anticipated to vote on their preferences and the manner in which they wish these preferences to be realised. The February 25, 2023 election that resulted in Bola Ahmed Tinubu and his vice president assuming office in Nigeria was intended to uphold democratic principles that benefit the electorate. This is due to individuals voting for him with the expectation that life will become more manageable (Abbas,



2022). This is in contrast to the administration of General Buhari, the former president of Nigeria.

As reported by the Punch Newspaper on October 21, 2022, Tinubu pledged to Nigerians that his primary action plan would focus on the national economy, agriculture, power, oil and gas, transportation, and education. In his manifesto reported by The Punch, Tinubu articulated his aim to cultivate a new culture in Nigeria founded on shared wealth, tolerance, compassion, and a steadfast dedication to treating every citizen with equal respect and consideration, as outlined in the Nigerian policy on education. Federal Government of Nigeria, 2014.

### **Analysis of Tinubu's Promises Prior to His Ascendancy as President**

The ascendancy of Tinubu to the presidency of Nigeria may not have materialised without the commitments made during his campaign. Prior to his election, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu unequivocally asserted that life would be facilitated for everyone based on the following principles;

- i. To build a Nigeria, particularly for our youth, where ample employment opportunities with fair compensation exist to foster an improved quality of life.
- ii. Produce, develop, and innovate additional items and services that we necessitate. Nigeria will be recognised as a self-sufficient nation of innovators, rather than mere consumers.
- iii. Increase exports and reduce imports to enhance both the naira and our quality of life.
- iv. Persist in aiding Nigerian farmers via informed agricultural policies that enhance production and guarantee fair incomes, enabling farmers to sustain their families and nourish the nation.
- v. Modernise and augment public infrastructure to facilitate optimal economic growth.
- vi. Empower and support our youth and women by using growing industries such as the internet economy, entertainment, culture, and tourism to construct a dignified Nigeria today.
- vii. Provide training and economic opportunities to the most impoverished and vulnerable individuals in our society. We aspire for a Nigeria in which no parent is forced to send a child to bed hungry, anxious about the prospect of food for the following day.
- viii. Produce, convey, and allocate adequate, economical electricity to empower our populace to illuminate their lives, homes, and aspirations.
- ix. Ensure accessibility and affordability of fundamental healthcare, education, and housing for all individuals.



- x. Ultimately, implement a robust and decisive policy that would forge a resilient yet flexible national security framework and measures to eradicate terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, and all other manifestations of violent extremism from our nation (Idowu, 2022).

The contention now is whether President Tinubu has fulfilled any of his commitments considering his slogan "Elofakanbale" be patient. This phrase has been embraced by the citizenry of Nigeria after his inauguration as president in 2023. Nigerians are currently experiencing extreme poverty, economic difficulties, indebtedness, excessive taxation, and food insecurity. This prompted a demand for the cessation of poor governance by the present political leaders, particularly President Ahmed Tinubu of Nigeria.

### **Concept of Malfeasance in Governance**

In our nation, grievances exist at all levels, including among government personnel who attribute the current hardships to the former administration, asserting that the current government is undertaking difficult yet intricate measures to rectify the situation. Government officials repeatedly urge patience and sacrifice; however, this appeal resonates poorly with citizens enduring hunger and degrading poverty, while those in power maintain a lavish lifestyle, exhibiting no apparent effort to mitigate governance expenses (Catholic Bishops Conference Communiqué, August 30, 2024). President Tinubu asserted that he encountered a deteriorated Nigeria. Is this a valid assertion? How can he assert that he inherited a deteriorated Nigeria given the lavish expenditures in his tenure?

It is noteworthy to scrutinise how a deteriorating nation allocates twenty-one billion Naira for the renovation of the Vice President's residence, procures SUVs at a unit cost of 160 million Naira for Senators and House of Assembly Members, totalling seventy billion Naira, and is further accused of disbursing five billion Naira to the Presidential Tax Committee, comprised of fewer than twenty individuals led by Taiwo Oyedele, as reported by The Guardian Nigeria News on September 29, 2023. Each Senator in Nigeria receives a monthly remuneration of 21 million Naira, in addition to various funds from agencies and commissions, excluding the constituency stipend, which Senators sometimes misappropriate. These exemplify a fraction of the imprudent expenditures managed by the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in Nigeria.

Woniowe (2020) asserts that bad governance is the antithesis of good governance. Comprehending weak governance necessitates a foundational grasp of good



governance. The terms "bad government" and "good governance" succinctly denote the quality and attributes of governance. Government, comparable to several notions in political philosophy, constitutes a decision-making process and the mechanism through which decisions are executed or not executed (Ali, 2015).

This is crucial as governance enables non-state actors to ascertain the existence of enduring connections between state operators and the broader society they are pledged to control (Crocker, 2019). The robust connection between the state and its inhabitants is contingent upon legitimacy. Legitimate authority underscores the adherence to rules and standards as opposed to the capricious exercise of official power. This indicates that all governmental actions must adhere rigorously to the legitimate demands of the populace. Compliance is contingent upon the fundamental principles of governance being beneficial or detrimental; effective governance promotes transparency and the judicious utilisation and administration of state power and resources for the collective welfare of society. Conversely, it constitutes poor government.

Bad governance signifies a state of governance in a nation that contravenes established standards of administration. This condition involves a leader that is unpatriotic, dishonest, undisciplined, corrupt, and devoid of vision in managing government affairs, particularly in the equal allocation of national resources, while also failing to exploit these for personal benefit (captain 2021). The current Nigerian administration exhibits characteristics of poor governance, particularly in the management of state power and limited resources, as seen by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's lavish expenditures.

### **Maladministration in Nigeria**

The governance failure in Nigeria is evident in the diminishing ability of political leaders to acknowledge systemic risks, including election fraud, terrorist attacks, conflict, kidnapping, banditry, food insecurity stemming from these issues, and police brutality, and to implement the requisite measures to address these challenges. Unlike the existing system where leadership is acquired through bribery, intimidation, and violence, Nigeria requires a governance structure based on the qualifications of its political leaders and the education of its electorate. Nigeria is contending with governance issues stemming from a failed democratic initiative. Surmounting these issues necessitate knowledgeable, honest, devoted, sincere, and trustworthy leaders, along with an informed electorate (Obasesan and Mayanne, 2021).



The prevailing hardship in Nigeria is attributed to poor governance. This may be contested based on the standpoint from which it is examined. Lamb (2014) noted that Nigeria is devoid of peace and stability due to tensions between state and non-state entities. This indicates that the Nigerian government does not promote active citizen engagement in national governance. Encouraging this entails engaging the electorates in the daily operations of governance. Participation is essential for attaining transparency, smart responses to individual or social actions, and equity in governance.

Inadequate governance can be attributed to the feeble and ineffectual political leadership in Nigeria. Nigerian leaders seem to lack the political will to implement reforms that could avert dictatorship, corruption, economic decline, food insecurity, kidnapping, hunger, and to diminish the inequality gap between the affluent and the impoverished, or the ruling elites and the general populace. The disparity between the affluent and the impoverished is widening daily. This scenario creates a fertile environment for many crimes, including banditry, terrorism, maritime piracy, oil theft, kidnapping, armed robbery, and cattle rustling, in a region that should be prosperous and equitable for all residents, regardless of gender, religion, or ethnicity (FGN, 2004).

Okonjo-Iweala, as cited by Wisdom (2024) in her piece "Nigeria is not where it should be," as published in 9 News Nigeria. Okonjo-Iweala expressed regret that Nigeria has not reached its potential after almost 60 years of independence. She condemned the politicisation of security, warning that such acts had exacerbated Nigeria's current issues. The prevailing issue has reached a stage where Nigerian citizens are experiencing increasing daily hardships. How can one justify the monopolisation of the economy by a private entity in a wealthy nation such as Nigeria? The Dangote Group of Companies currently holds a monopoly over several trades in Nigeria, much to the astonishment of the populace, with indirect assistance from the Federal Government. The Nigerian government has been unable to repair its refineries despite the expenditure of billions of Naira. However, a private firm was produced. The Federal Government not only accused the firm of attempting to control the refinery but ultimately reached an agreement to sell the refined goods to it, at the disadvantage of the citizens.

Consequently, patriotic Nigerians demanded the termination of the odious administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The appeal is further endorsed by the religious leaders designated as peacekeepers. The commitments made by the current president of Nigeria, as outlined in this article, have yet to be fulfilled. The



citizens are enduring hardship to the degree that those who once provided assistance can no longer support their immediate families, let alone extend generosity to others. Society consists solely of the affluent and the impoverished groups. The affluent consist solely of politicians and their collaborators, whilst the middle class has been utterly decimated by these politicians. Consequently, the population of Nigeria could no longer endure this challenging circumstance. The inhabitants of Nigeria demonstrated for ten days, from August 1 to August 10, 2024, demanding an end to poor administration.

### **Analysis of #EndBadGovernance in Nigeria**

The phrase #EndBadGovernance, utilised in a recent protest in Nigeria, seems to represent a consensus among demonstrators advocating for reform. The protest was inspired by the escalating expense of living in the nation. The manifestation of the Nigerians' frustrations became intolerable on August 1, 2024, when security agencies attempted to obstruct the demonstrators from conducting a lawful and peaceful protest. Before the designated day, several demonstrators obstructed the Abuja-Kaduna highway and moved peacefully, posing no threat to the inhabitants.

On August 1, 2024, protests in Lagos, Kaduna, Kano, Gombe, Jigawa, Borno, and the capital were initially peaceful but escalated into violence following police action, which including the deployment of tear gas against the demonstrators in an attempt to disperse them. On this day, a journalist was apprehended and confined for a legitimate demonstration. A curfew was imposed in certain states to prevent citizens from voicing their discontent with the egregious policies of the Nigerian government. Protesters were killed, properties were destroyed in various regions, and those gathered at Eagle Square in Abuja were intimidated by a police helicopter. In response to the government's atrocities, enraged demonstrators set fire to the All Progressive Congress (APC) secretariat in Jigawa State, incinerated an ICT training centre in Kano, and caused the destruction of buildings valued at billions of naira in several regions of Northern Nigeria. This protest endured for 10 days and culminated in the occupation of all streets in Abuja, in a demonstration titled the "One-Million-Man March." (Odeniyi, 2024).

However, many states within the federation, such as Ekiti, Ondo, Oyo, Kwara, and portions of the eastern states, did not participate in the protest. A basic question arises: why must these states decide against joining the demonstration since the protesters' demands benefit everyone? This can be ascribed to the pervasive corruption in Nigeria. In an effort to gain the president's favour, certain state governors opted to entice prominent unions, such as the Nigeria Union of Road



Transport Workers (NURTW), with funds intended for the provision of social amenities in their states. The chairman of a drivers' union openly urged his members to abstain from participating in the intended demonstration against poor governance, as reported by TVC News Nigeria on July 26, 2024. The drivers' union not only disregarded the protest, but so did the Nigeria Labour Congress, which purports to represent the populace. This is further corroborated by Joe Ajaero's assertion, president of the Nigeria Labour Congress that the union could not disengage from a protest it did not orchestrate. Ajaero added that the Nigeria Labour Congress possesses internal trade union systems, particularly regarding leadership decision-making processes, which industrial actions, such as protests, must navigate prior to execution (Anthony, 2024).

From the aforementioned assertions, it can be fairly inferred that the unions intended to represent the impoverished have chosen to disregard their concerns. The repercussions of this are currently evident, as there has been no improvement in Nigeria following the protest. The demonstrators wanted an improved standard of living for all citizens, a reduction in food prices, an enhancement of the cost of living, a mitigation of insecurity that instils fear, and the urgent prosecution of known instigators and criminals. Also, the protesters demanded for permanent decrease the operational expenses of the executive and National Assembly by 50%, fully execute the Oronsaye report to scrap some non-functional agencies, ensure security for farmers, declare a state of emergency in education, increase budgetary allocations for education and healthcare by 20%, revert to the previous national anthem, establish a living wage, and amend the constitution to permit referendums (Uti, 2024). All of these, among others, were requested; nevertheless, following the demonstration, life does not appear to be promising for everyone in Nigeria. Regrettably, 10 activists were charged for treason and other grave offences before the federal high court located in the capital, Abuja, on Monday, September 2, 2024 for fighting for the right of the masses. What steps should we take to strengthen Nigeria's economy?

### **Conclusion**

The End Bad Governance protest could have represented a constructive opportunity for reforming Nigeria; however, the discord among the designated parties, instigated by the purported supermen, rendered the endeavour seemingly futile. This can be substantiated by the encouraging turn out of the protesters in northern Nigeria and in Abuja, the Federal Capital. It is regrettable that the miscreant commandeered the protest, resulting in the destruction of expensive property and the fatalities of several demonstrators, among other consequences. Nonetheless, the demonstration serves



as a wake-up call for the government to recognise that Nigerians and their leaders are sitting on gun powder that can explode at any moment. Had it been the protest did not stop on time, it could have led to the end of an entity called Nigeria.

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