



## Peaceful Governance and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: the Role of the Economic Historian

### Grace Malachi Brown (Ph.D.)

Senior Lecturer, Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, P.M.B. 5047, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria | E-mail: [nyetubrown@yahoo.com](mailto:nyetubrown@yahoo.com) | Tel: +234-803-313-5226

**Abstract** – *In this study, we examined the various sections of the Electoral Act, 2010, Cap. A1103-1202, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, more particularly, Sections 1-158. We analyzed the problems and prospects associated to elections and election tribunals and were able to identify the key players, such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Government, Political Parties, National Orientation Agency, Security Agents, Religious Organization, the Political Scientist, Judicial Body and Individuals. We observed that these key players usually play prominent roles in any election in Nigeria (be it local government, state, national assembly and presidential elections). Our findings are that Nigerians need political education in order to improve in their electoral system and democratic practice, as the people should learn to abhor tribalism, factionalism, election malpractice in order not to mortgage their rights and future. In order to advance an enduring democracy, the study concludes that Nigerians should follow the general pattern found in advanced democratic states and properly blended with indigenous peculiarities for an enviable political culture sustained by rule of law.*

**Key words:** *Democratic Elections, Regulatory Laws, Problems and Prospects*



---

## **Peaceful Governance and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: the Role of the Economic Historian**

Grace Malachi Brown (Ph.D.)

Senior Lecturer, Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Ignatius  
Ajuru University of Education, P.M.B. 5047, Rumuolumeni,

Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria | E-mail: nyetubrown@yahoo.com | Tel: +234-803-313-  
5226

---

**Abstract:** *Nigeria's history has been riddled with political violence, tribalism, corruption, nepotism, bad governance, looting of the national treasury by politicians and those in public offices. Is it due to the lack of the knowledge of our economic history, the dearth of our economic historians, inadequate utilization or the recognition of our economic history that successive governments have been unable to ascertain and identify the causative, root or remote causes for such national disasters? This study is geared at using the economic historian analytical tools to curb Nigeria's disaster management for peaceful governance and sustainable development, divergent techniques of both the economist and the historian to understand the economic history of Nigeria from 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960 to 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2015. It discovers that without a thorough grasp or understanding of our past political economy, we cannot achieve a meaningful, stable, peaceful governance and sustainable development in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Conceptual Clarification, Good or Peaceful Governance, Role of the Economic Historian*

---

### **1. Introduction**

Almost all major development institutions today say that promoting good or peaceful governance is an important part of their agendas that will bring about sustainable development. In a well-cited quote, the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted, that: "good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development". Despite this consensus, "good or peaceful governance" is an extremely elusive objective. It means different things to different organizations, not to mention to different actors within these organizations (to make matters even more confusing, governance experts also routinely focus on other types of governance - global governance, corporate governance, IT governance, participatory governance and so on - which may be related only peripherally to the good governance agenda vis-à-vis domestic politics and administration (which is our focus in this paper).

### **2. Conceptual Clarifications**

Before dissecting the issues in this paper, we shall first examine the terminologies: Good or Peaceful Governance, Sustainable Development and the Economic History.

- (1) Good or Peaceful Governance: is a term that has become a part of the vernacular of a large range of development institutions and other actors within the international arena. What it means exactly, however, has not been so well established. When it comes to “good governance” and why this is problematic for the practical outcomes that development institutions and the like are trying to achieve.
- (2) Sustainable Development: is the ability of government to maintain or consolidate the economic growth of its economy.
- (3) Economic Historian: is a historian that deals with the study of economies or economic phenomena of the past. Analysis in economic history is undertaken using a combination of historical methods, statistical methods and the application of economic theory to historical situations and institutions.

### 3. Good or Peaceful Governance as a Concept

Upon careful examination of the works of the World Bank and other multilateral development banks on good governance addresses economic institutions and public sector management, including transparency and accountability, regulatory reform, and public sector skills and leadership. Other organizations, like the United Nations, European Commission and OECD, are more likely to highlight democratic governance and human rights, aspects of political governance avoided by the Bank. Some of the many issues that are treated under the governance programmes of various donors include election monitoring, political party support, combating corruption, building independent judiciaries, security sector reform, improved service delivery, transparency of government accounts, decentralization, civil and political rights, government responsiveness and “forward vision”, and the stability of the regulatory environment for private sector activities (including price systems, exchange regimes, and banking systems).

John Gerring (2005) spelled out eight “criteria of conceptual goodness” that provide a useful framework. Four of these criteria are especially relevant in this paper:

- a) First, “good governance” lacks parsimony. Unlike good concepts, good governance has endless definitions, and we always need the details of each to understand if we are talking about the same thing.
- b) Second, “good governance” lacks differentiation. Well-governed countries often sound a lot like functioning liberal democracies, for instance, and it is not clear how they differ.
- c) Third, “good governance” lacks coherence. Its many possible characteristics — from respect for human rights to efficient banking regulations — do not clearly belong together.
- d) Fourth, and most important, “good governance” lacks theoretical utility. It confuses, rather than aids, in the formulation of theory and the related project of hypothesis testing, not least because the concept is so fluid that analysts can easily define it in the way that best fits their data.

Taking into consideration the above analysis by John Gerring, it is worthy to deduce that government exercises its influence and control through law and coercion, over its citizen in a state. Government has many kinds, and the following distinctions should be noted:

- (i) Constitutional and non-constitutional: in the first, power is limited by a constitution, in the second it is not. Many governments pretend to be constitutional: a common sign of this is a written constitution, which carefully specifies the rights of the citizen while neglecting to mention how he might enforce them. This is common in many of the post-colonial African constitutions.
- (ii) Absolute and limited government. This distinction concerns the extent to which a government's power is limited by other agencies within the state (law being principal among them), as opposed to other states.
- (iii) Political and non-political. Certain institutions, arbitration, adjudication and conciliation of interest within the state, are deemed to have a political character; the most important of them being courts of law. Government can, however, exist without such institutions, and even without law in which case it may be despotic, or merely primitive.
- (iv) In addition to those basic distinctions, various classifications of government have evolved, for example according to who holds power and in whose interest (the influence here being Aristotle). The principal ones now recognized are monarchy, democracy, aristocracy, oligarchy, and tyranny.

Roger Scruton (1982) observed that theories of government are legion, but it is always important to distinguish between those which see government as a means to an end. And those which see it as an end in itself. Hegel's theory is an example of the latter: standard liberal and socialist theories are examples of the former. If there are human ends for which government is necessary, then probably government must always be considered (as least to some extent) as a means to them. Thus, if government is necessary for peace, friendship, production and social life, then government must be conceived as a means to these basic and indispensable goods. But if anarchism is right, and those goods are obtainable without government, then government may yet be defensible as an end in itself (that is, as defining a form of life, that of political allegiance or obligation) which is desirable in itself, say, because it is the full expression of man's freedom, as was canvassed Hegel. In reality most political practice recognizes that government is both a means to order, and an end of social existence, and has a dual value founded in compromise between these two.

The weakness of the good governance concept, however, calls into question each of these projects. Without stronger concepts, donor agencies have no clear basis upon which to argue the merits of one measurement versus another, or to evaluate the relative importance of

various components of governance in any classification. Without better measures, donor agencies cannot, in a rigorous manner, empirically test hypotheses about how political and economic institutions change, much less develop evidence-based strategies about how to positively influence this change. Nor can they be very convincing about the rigour of quantitative findings suggesting a causal relationship between (weakly-conceptualized) measures of governance and development outcomes.

Rwanda provides just one illustration of some of these issues. As many observers note, Rwanda has made clear progress in terms of economic growth, public sector management and regulatory reform since the genocide in 1994. As many other observers note, its record with respect to democracy and respect for civil and political rights has been extremely problematic. Should Rwanda be considered well governed because of its economic progress, or poorly governed because of its democratic deficits? The UK's Department for International Development (DFID), for instance, has been the largest bilateral donor in Rwanda, effectively arguing the former. Human Rights Watch, among others, sharply criticized DFID policy last year, effectively arguing the latter.

#### **4. How Good Or Peaceful Governance Can Affect Sustainable Development**

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in June 2012—commonly referred to as Rio+20 - left many perplexed. If a number of advances were made, the results fell well short of what is needed to redirect the global economy onto a sustainable course. Given that 20 years have passed since the Earth Summit, and 25 since the Brundtland Commission launched the notion of “sustainable development,” clearly something is not working.

It is time for the sustainable development community to ask itself some tough questions: Why is sustainable development not “selling”? How might we re-envision the concept for the world of today? And what does this imply for organizations like the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), whose mission both contributes to, and depends on, the realization of sustainable development?

To explore these questions, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) organized an informal meeting in Abu Dhabi on December 2–3, 2012, with a handpicked selection of leaders and experts from around the world. The participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds, including present and former ministers of environment and development, senior UN officials, corporate CEOs, senior academics and leaders of major civil society organizations. The executive director of UNEP, Achim Steiner, played an active part in the discussions and was accompanied by staff from his Executive Office. The discussions were moderated by Simon Zadek, a senior fellow at IISD, and held under the Chatham House rule.

The vision of how sustainable development might best be pursued in a post-Rio+20 world, shows that without good governance, there is no strategic basis as to how sustainable development can effectively be catalyzed.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) has long had an interest in governance as it relates to the achievement of sustainable development. From the institute's early days, it was observed that multilateral environmental agreements and other modes of

national and international sustainable development decision-making, were the basis for improving good governance in the following areas:-

- a) Governance: Structure and process for decision-making and accountability
- b) Global Environmental Governance
- c) Internet Governance and Sustainable Development
- d) Sustainable Development Strategies
- e) Transparency in International Environmental Decision-making

Governments (be it domestic and international) has roles to play to ensure good governance so as to improve sustainable development. Without good or peaceful governance, it is impossible to achieve its objective roles in society.

## 5. Role of the Economic Historian for Peaceful Governance and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Colonialism is a major feature of the **economic history of Nigeria**. Britain eventually gained control of Nigerian administration. After independence, the Nigerian economy seemed very promising. Many saw Nigeria, with 25% of Africa's population, as an emerging economy. However, this potential never materialized. A series of unfortunate political and economic events have stalled Nigeria's growth. The country still plays an important economic role in the world, especially as a producer of crude oil and gas.

The role of the economic historian can be viewed in the following areas:-

- a) Redesigning and reconfiguration of governance systems and institutions
- b) Ethics, transparency and accountability in the public sector
- c) Reforming institutions of the public service
- d) Strengthening the human resource capacity including leadership
- e) Elevating the image, values and status of the public service
- f) Strengthening decentralized governance for reducing poverty
- g) Building capacities of governance and public administration for managing conflict
- h) Focus on special needs of Africa
- i) Reconstruction governance and public administration after violent conflict

Other roles of the economic historian are as follows:-

- a) Because economic history asks economic questions – be they about the demand and supply of goods and services, about costs of production, levels of income, the distribution of wealth, the volume and direction of investment, or the structure of overseas trade – it inevitably deals with large numbers, with aggregates.
- b) The economic historian must have some competence in the statistical handling of measureable variables and also need to understand and be able to use the relevant body of economic theory to solve economic problems.
- c) Economic history has both to make up its own theories for testing and also to ask other sorts of questions and use other sorts of methods. It may draw upon different social sciences, for example social anthropology, but pertinent answers are commonly to be found by using the traditional methods of historical scholarship.
- d) Economic history deals with individuals and groups in society. It concerns itself with particular businessmen or companies, with those who influenced or carried out economic policy, with pressure groups or administrative entities.
- e) Economic history has many affinities with what the eighteenth century called 'philosophical' or 'conjectural' history. Which is not surprising as Adam Smith practised that sort of history while laying down the bases for the study of what he and his contemporaries called political economy and what we have come to call economics. Today the pursuit of economics might well benefit from more of Smith's awareness of history. Economic history itself, however, cannot proceed without using the divergent techniques of both the economist and the historian.
- f) Few people then doubted that economic history included social history as well. Economic changes did not occur in isolation but were related to their effects upon mankind.
- g) The economic historian investigates issues relating to population growth, finance, transport, towns and individual businesses.
- h) The Economic historian tended to gravitate to political history.
- i) The economic historians are appreciating that they need, today as in the past, to present such basic economic matters as wage and price movements, rates and levels of unemployment, imports and exports, into language which those keen to learn can readily comprehend; and, at the same time and more important, to show how people in different sections of society have been affected by them. In practice, this means a greater switch to the social aspects: not the old rag-bag that used to pass for social history but something built up logically upon basic economic foundations. Given this approach, it has been possible to construct new courses dealing with such topics as the growth of leisure and its manifold effects; industrial relations (not just trade union

history), and business history: the study of the units, not only in manufacturing industry, which, collectively, generate economic wealth. An economic foundation, too, provides the most useful starting point for any study of the women's movement. Here, as in other interpretations, there is much to be learned from other subjects such as sociology and psychology. Just as the political historians have benefited from many of the economic historians' researches, so the economic historians, in their turn, will gain from findings in other subjects.

- j) Economic history is still too dependent upon a theoretical underpinning which makes assumptions about behaviour in the past which were not necessarily present at the time. The dominant concern is the allocation of scarce resources of land, labour and capital, and whether this was done in a manner which produced the most rapid rate of economic growth; the process is usually seen as value-free and lacking in conflict.
- k) The organisation of production – whether in farm, workshop or factory – and the technology which was used, has been the traditional subject of enquiry for economic historians. This is reasonable, particularly in the study of societies in which work was life, since there was little time or opportunity for education or leisure.
- l) If we are to study man, then we have to accept that we must study men and women in the mass. Although economic history has some heroes – inventors or traders – it is concerned essentially with the behaviour of groups, with generalisation and therefore with theory. Economic history is thus inevitably a social science, applying the methods of economics, statistics, sociology and demography to the study of the past. It is also an essential component of the study of contemporary society, a bridge in both directions between the present and the past.
- m) Economic history can be thought of as a search for understanding of the nature of economic activity in the past. Such study is intrinsically rewarding but also can be useful in shedding light on questions of relevance to economic policy makers. Indeed it might be argued that economic history should be as much a standard part of the training of professional economists as is statistics.
- n) The study of African economic history has thus been influenced from the outset by a particular interplay between intellectual enquiry and moral purpose. The past has been reconstructed to make it usable, perhaps to legitimate political independence, perhaps to uncover the long roots of underdevelopment. A sense of commitment can be a great asset, and can inspire work of the highest quality.
- o) The challenge for the next generation of economic historians is to see how far our knowledge of the pre-colonial era can be enlarged. Only then may we discern long-run trends in the history of the continent before the coming of the Europeans (and perhaps even before the coming of Islam), and be able to view afresh the perennial issue of the impact of the western world on the development of the indigenous economy. Despite

formidable research problems and occasional personal hazards, Africa thus remains a continent of academic opportunity.

## 6. Conclusion

From this study, we have been able to observe that without good or peaceful governance, it will be impossible for Sustainable Development to thrive. The role of the economic historian tackling a number of inter-related global issues such as economy, institution, unemployment, poverty, inequality, hunger, environmental degradation and so forth, cannot be over-emphasized. It is often said that a better understanding of economic history would have helped us to avoid the worst of the recent crisis. Over the next few weeks, free exchange will consider milestones in economic history, showing how they contributed to the development of economic thought.

## References

Brundtland Commission, 2012

European Commission

Human Rights Watch

International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

John Gerring (2004), What is the Case Study and Is It Good For? *American Political Science Journal Review*, Vol.98(2), 341-354, Cambridge University Press

Kofi Anan (2014), The Impact of Sustainable Development in Africa. Being Lecture delivered by the former UN Secretary-General.

Roger Scruton (1982), *A Dictionary of Political Thought*, London: Manmillan Press

UK Department for International Development (DFID)

UN Conference on Sustainable Development, June, 2012

United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP)

World Bank on Good Governance