

# Decentralization and Good Administration: A Reflection on the Continuing Paradox of State Administration and Relations in Nigeria.

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## Abstract

The adoption of decentralization in Nigerian has not produced the right outcome due to government fiscal and political centralization. More so, the isolated application of the dimensions of decentralization without taking cognizance of their inter-linkages has birthed varying forms of contradictions in the polity. This paper utilizing the analytical approach and documentary methods noted that these paradoxes have impacted adversely on the nation's development hence question's the value of the state. This paper therefore recommends that the government should strive to entrench in practice the true character of decentralization by incooperating its linkages so that Nigeria can stimulate a healthy spirit of competition among its divergent groups necessary for economic growth and development.

**Keywords:** Decentralization, Centralization, Conflict, Good Administration, Corruption and Development.

## 1. Introduction.

Nigeria before colonialism reflected a collection of independent states and kingdoms each having its own form of government and administrative system. With the colonial conquest and the imposition of the skewed colonial pattern administration that was hierarchically structure with the upper echelon staffed by only white colonial master. The lower echelon on the other was occupied by locals who did the rough jobs of colonial government. The colonial administration did not seek to integrate the heterogeneity. Conventional administrative wisdom allowed the continued existence of the kingdoms and city state although structured under a network to form the Northern and Southern protectorate administered as a single British colony under a governor general. Amalgamated in 1914 to ease the strain on resources, by 1954 a clear form of decentralization emerged under a federal structure. This form of federalism made room for a central and regional government coexisting simultaneously. The multiplicity and differences in culture and religion (heterogeneity) may informed the British colonial administration decision to adopt this of government structuring; albeit it suit the spirit and the taste of the time since the people that make up the protectorate were significantly dissimilar in all areas.

Federalism provokes a need for being a part of the whole while still maintaining the peculiarity of individual groups. Even with the present call for the strengthening of sub-national government over the central government due to the rising wave of conflict that has given rise to social distance; the imperative for a federal relation still hold strong among Nigerians. This challenge is partly occasioned by civilian political misrule and the military divide-and-rule methodology of governance that was intended to keep a strong hold on power as well as draw the people's attention away from what was going on in government. Side-by-side with the above, the military system upheld the banner of centralization of power and administration, this contradiction notwithstanding decentralization remain a fundamental character and part of Nigeria's federal administrative system. Decentralization is the expansion of local autonomy through the transfer of power and responsibilities away from national bodies. The principle of decentralization is to engender the spirit of popular political population, the granting of basic freedom to localities and the use of local resources according to local demand (Heywood, 2002). In the modern Nigerian state the necessity for decentralization is not just limited to the above already mentioned factors but subsumes the very need to maintain the liberties of the different collectives, accountability and good administration that will effect development.

But because of the prevailing governance and administrative dislocations inherent in the Nigerian state, there exist visible elements of conflicting paradox that has fractured relationship between citizens as civil society and the government. The relationship between these two is one primarily characterized by distrust, disagreements and conflict with severe implication on the nation's development process. Development questions the orthodoxy, its ways of doing things and seeks to advance the pattern of human and societal existence. It is a dynamic process of social, economic and political redefinition of attitudes, systems and structures; requiring the investment of resources by the various segments of society appropriately. This process requires openness, engagement and participation in the governance process. Effectively conducted, it allows the collectives to have a significant say and influence in the governance and the developmental process with less friction and antagonism. Genuine openness and engagement spreads the spirit of collaboration, understanding and respect for each other (groups). Under the elements of mutuality of respect and trust, the struggle for the control of state

power eliminates in every government dimension individual or group bias and selfish accumulation of public wealth. The goal of government and its representatives is to uphold and promote the common good of the whole collective in a manner that no one group's right is undermined as the system ensures that every group are engaged and are contributing significantly in governance and the development process.

In Nigeria, the character that accompanies decentralization only existed in theory rather than in practice. Decentralization thrives in a nation and it fruitfully is visibly enjoyed by all when participation is genuine and open. Not only is the governmental system in Nigeria excessively centralized but it is also closed with its privileges only open to a few. Although the character of centralization was introduced in to Nigeria's federal system by the military due to its command and control hierarchical structuring that is highly centralized with the opening of the political space it has refused to disappear even now that the military is out of power. The process of decentralization has been characterized by infractions and the affairs of government at all levels defined by fiat lacking in public participation and accountability in Nigeria. Due to the prevailing pattern of contradictions government and administration has remained restricted with entrance defined by a client-patron network; thus making the struggle for access into the political space with its privileges becoming tensed without due regard for stated laws. It has also reflected a character of exclusion and marginalization of the rights of the majority. The fundamental downfall of these prevailing abuses on the system is that of conflict and other mischievous schemes as a means of gaining recognition and entrance into the mainstream political space with its privilege of partaking in the sharing of the national cake that have infringed on good administration. With these characters of politics, governance and administration in Nigeria has become emblematic of continuing paradox which is a contradiction of the essence of governance and good state administration. Governance and good state administration should reflect a balance between the demands of the citizens and that of the state. Furthermore, it should mirror the ideal that

the primary responsibility of the central institution of governance is the creation of an enabling environment for citizens to enjoy "the greatest happiness of the greatest number", state managers insist that the state has high stakes in the democratic content of the social order at any given moment. While the state craves autonomy, citizens desire freedom from the state's demands and control. The dilemma for every political community is the determination of the delicate balance between: the state's requirements for autonomy to provide the minimum conditions for citizens' loyalty, and the citizens' requirement for freedom from state control. Due to this continuing paradox of governance structuring and administration has led to the gradual erosion and general weakness of political institutions, brought about by decades of military misrule hence what is left of these institutions today is a hotch-potch from Nigeria's past (IDEA, 2001:138).

Drawing from these continuing contradictions, this paper therefore utilizing the documentary and analytical research methods briefly examines those areas of continuing paradox of the Nigerian state vis-à-vis the now democratic persona that has continued to undermine peaceful state progress.

## **2. Decentralization and Good Administration: Mirroring the Nexus.**

Decentralization is a generally acceptable framework for organizing a society that is significantly diverse and different in its formation. It takes on a much deeper meaning where the issue of inclusiveness and integration is a fundamental goal of the state is to evolve governance system that is all inclusive. Governance in this case refers to the manner in which government carries out its functions and is determined by the relationship between the ruler and the ruled (Nnoli, 2003:199). Honing on the relation between the two parties, Nnoli noted that governance answers the question of number, the period of the relationship, willingness to use power for common good, whether the relationship is benign or hostile, the degree of collaboration, trust and co-operation between the two, nature of political organization, the checks they impose upon each other and the character of the negotiative process. At the heart of it all, governance should mirror a process of social engagement between the ruler and the ruled in a society. It is based on the understanding that the government cannot carry out its functions without using, or depending on, the ruled in one form or the another (Nnoli, 2003).

Decentralization presents the state the political and administrative capacity to respond to the complex demand of governance in a diverse or dissimilar society. Decentralization refers to the extent to which authority, responsibility and accountability are devolved throughout the organization. Decentralization according to Adamolekun is the organization of government activity outside the headquarters of the central government either as administrative measure involving the transfer of resources and responsibilities to agents of the central government located outside the headquarters or as a political arrangement involving the devolution of specific powers, functions and resources by the central government to sub-national level government units (Emenuo, 2005:313). These two views of decentralization do not differ from that of Rodonelli, (1981:137). Apart from viewing decentralization as a method of arrangement of governmental activity, it also connotes an administrative structuring aimed at promoting good administration that has positive impact on good governance; as it allows for speedier reactions to environmental change pressures (Thomson, 2004:1124).

Good administration by public bodies means: 1 Getting it right; 2 Being customer focused; 3 Being open and accountable; 4 Acting fairly and proportionately; 5 Putting things right; and 6 Seeking continuous improvement. Good administration seeks to improve and strengthen good governance in a manner that protects and promote the common good. Beneath the confines and define of good administration there is the focus on: i) efficient and effective delivery of public services; ii) accountable government; iii) promotion of human right and freedom; iv) Safety that guarantees peace and security; strengthened the process of devolution and integration (IDEA, 2001:13). As such, reclining behind these goals is the deep desire to achieve good governance which is a fundamental requirement for the attainment of the essential aspiration of an egalitarian society as clearly defined in the Nigerian constitution.

Clearly demarcating the difference between centralization and decentralization remains a strenuous issue as some scholars see the two concepts as two side of the same coin yet bordering on a thin line of difference (Bello-Imam, 2004:2-3). This perception concurs with the views of Thomson, (2004) and Bartol and Martin, (1998:269) but the latter two scholars however noted that centralization and decentralization form a continuum, with many possible degree of delegation of power and authority in between. Basal to the factors that necessitate decentralization Thomson, (2004:722) have put forward ten of such for which Bartol and Martin, (1998:270) have narrowed them to four with three of the reasons capturing aptly and relating to the concept and the topic under examination. These three factors are: i) large size, ii) geographical dispersion, and iii) environmental uncertainty. Relating to the last factor, decentralization therefore carries more risk and uncertainty-but it can be essential for coping with environmental demands. As it allows decisions to be made by the people who must implement the changes ...using their initiative to change things in a dynamic turbulent environment (Thomson, 2004:724).

Going beyond the held perception that decentralization creates room for disunity, ethnicity and the problem of linking the powers of the general with the specific units, it however on the contrary eliminates the problem of making specific decisions without referral back (Thomson, 2004) to central government. Hence as (Business, 2002:1223) holds that decentralization becomes a form of empowerment. This is because it often leads to the establishment of relatively independent units (Bartol and Martin, 1998:270). Decentralization rightly managed arouses a peaceful social relations and collaboration in the exercise of state power in a manner that promotes understanding and collaboration between the ruler and the ruled. Decentralization also draws its meaning and value from the stand point of allowing greater autonomy by strengthening local identities in so far as it allows them to assert their influence on policy and program administration which is essential in promoting individuality of identity difference from other ethnic groups (Haralambos and Holborn, 2007:194). More so, where divergence and local adaptation are required, responsibilities should be decentralized with the smallest unit capable of embracing the geographical extent of a problem and able to command the appropriate professional services assuming responsibility (Sapru, 2008:127).

The arguments that validates the utility of decentralization has been further explored by Triesman, (2002) as he captures all the angles that better illuminate and re-enforce the bases of its applicability as a form of institutional organization for evolving a truly federal structure irrespective of some discernable challenges in practice. These challenges if not properly managed has the capacity for generating conflicts. Although, the apparent conflict between these arguments may be, in part, a matter of definitions, albeit, they apply to quite different types of decentralization (Treisman, 2002). Central to the decentralization discussion are seven distinct argument areas which combine not only to keep the decentralization debate alive but also project the value and weakness of true decentralization. These six distinct arguments and concerns according to Treisman, (2002) are related to: i) The local knowledge argument; ii) The accountability argument; iii) The interjurisdictional competition argument; iv) The checks-and-balances; v) The vertical competition and duplication; vi) increasing the number of incompetent or corrupt officials.

Theoretically, decentralization can be understood and explained from four approaches which are: i) the doctrinal approach; this approach treats decentralization as an end in itself through the process of romantic idealization; ii) the political approach; which presumes that decentralization assume a political will directed at passing on powers and functions to decentralized units, and allowing those units operate within the framework of autonomy; iii) the administrative approach is primarily motivated by enhancing administrative rationality and efficiency; and v) the dual-role approach which places decentralization within the larger context of development and change (Mohit, 2006:163-165). Decentralization subsumes concepts like devolution, delegation, deconcentration and privatization. It however holds its real value by promoting participation, responsiveness, legitimacy and liberty (Heywood, 2002:159). These characters of decentralization give meaning to its true advantages where it is rightly applied. Decentralization is weaved around and tied to three dimension which are: i) Fiscal: fiscal autonomy and source of funds; ii) Institutional: sub-national government administration and non-governmental institutions; and iii) Political: political rights and civil liberties. Scholars like Parker, (1995) have argued for the application of decentralization in a manner that promotes its functioning through proper inter-linkages for it to produce the right result.

The failure of governance in third world societies including Nigeria lies in the isolated application of the three

decentralization dimensionalities, that is, placing emphasis on one to the neglect of the other components. This problem is also derived from the isolated scholarly treatment of these dimensionalities in the extant literature as aptly noted by Parker, (1995). As

discerned in the literature between the political, fiscal and institutional dimensions of decentralization. In most of the literature to date, however, emphasis given to these broader political, fiscal and institutional elements of decentralization has been segmented according to different disciplines... The result is that no framework has been identified that assesses all the dimensions of decentralization and their interlinkages.

This dilemma of isolated view and improper application of the dimensions of decentralization without due regard for their inter-linkages has contributed to administrative ineffectiveness and the failure of governance in most third world societies Nigeria not precluded. On a general note, political dimension of decentralization is a distinctive paradigm of organization geared towards resolving the systematic contradictions of its distinct collectives (Bassey, 2005:29). While, fiscal component revolves around the manner in which national resources are fairly and equitably distributed taking into cognizance the need for fiscal adequacy and independence of the various units. And organizational aspect of decentralization resolve the challenging question of spatial limit of authority in order to ensure adaptation, participation and effective response to specific sectional need without recourse to the center.

Relating to inter-linkages, Parker citing (Cheema and Rondinelli (1983) recognized the importance of the combine application of political, fiscal and institutional elements of decentralization as being essential for success through their close interconnectivity. It is through this process that a higher value for governance and its administration is assured. Thus, decentralization in tandem with its component dimensions are able to produce the right outcomes. These outcomes should reflect the characteristics of; i) effectiveness; ii) the responsiveness; and iii) sustainability as by political stability, fiscal adequacy and institutional flexibility anchored on political, fiscal and institutional elements (Parker, 1995).

Effective decentralization is focused at participatory governance for good administration to be established as it ensures administration is brought closer to the people for the good of the differentiated communities despite the marked heterogeneity yet geographically defined and operated as one entity; this is the essence of decentralization. In this light, Gandhi observed that decentralization is the sine qua non for the development of a society along non violent means (Sapru, 2008:312). Irrespective of the value dimension of decentralization, its operation in Nigeria had continued to produce unwholesome paradoxes that have continued to fall wrongly on the people, the economy and the whole society. Hence, the next subsection takes a brief review of some of the continuing paradox that has presented the present day Nigeria some developmental as well as relational challenges.

### **3. The Paradox of Centralization in a Decentralized Federal System.**

Centralization and decentralization may be seen as contradictory concepts. On the contrary, the two concepts are not direct opposites of one another, as no country ever completely centralizes or decentralizes its administration. In a sense, therefore, countries are only classified according to their degree of centralization and decentralization (Bello-Imam, 2004:2-3). The governmental structures operated in Nigeria can be said to a decentralized state at least in theory, but in practice, the state and its bureaucracy have become highly centralized and unaccountable.

Nigeria from 1954 had operated a federal system of government that gave substantial powers to the regional government. This structuring continued until 1966 when the first military size power; understandably the need for the change lied in the gross abuses, conflicts and the seemingly irreconcilable difference created by the political class in their quest for control of state power. That in itself was a paradox considering their total neglect of the developmental needs of the new independent state which was a considerable expectation. Their struggle which took on ethnic and self-centric dimension had in fact to some degree laid the foundation of present day ethnic division that has become volatile. Centralization is the concentration of political power or government authority at the national level. The centralization direction of the military although derived from its organizational hierarchical command and control structure was intended to achieve national unity, uniformity of service provision and development, equality, and prosperity (Heywood, 2002:158) for all irrespective differences in creed or religion.

On the whole, this intension in itself was gross misunderstood as it sparked a series of political unrest and coup that portrait Nigeria as an unstable state. Evidently, the centralization of a federal state has neither

promoted development nor has it enhanced national integration. Instead it facilitated the emergence of corrupt and autocratic governments and resulted in ethnic and regional inequalities and conflicts. The failure of centralization has been attributed to a number of causes. First, it led to excessive focus on state structures as the agent of development to the neglect of popular organization. Second, it encouraged the expansion of state bureaucracy beyond available skills. Third, centralization led to corruption as it stifled the mechanism for ensuring accountability by public officials (Enemuo, 2005:312-313).

This is not to say that centralization is not a workable system but its application in a constituted federal state had breached the fundamental principles of the two forms of political and administrative arrangements. The failure to solve the problem rightly was purely occasioned by the pursuit of inconsistent goal by utilizing inappropriate tools.

The centralizing paradox and its effect have been felt in no other area than in the area of federal finance. The centralization of federal finances started with The Decree No 13 of 1970, No. 9 of 1971 and No. 6 of 1975 by the military. These instruments were deliberately rolled out and implemented to guarantee the towering stature of the federal government on fiscal matters over the other sub-national governments in Nigeria. This period also saw the diminishing application of the derivation principle as a revenue sharing criterion on the horizontal plane. Unfortunately, most of the criteria that were given prominence were those that favoured the region in control of the federal military government. Nonetheless, those criteria did not stimulate sub-national government to explore effectively their available tax capacity; hence the end product was a more than 90% dependence of the sub-national government on federal for the implementation of their budgetary requirement. Similarly, the criteria or principles that determined division of taxing power inadvertently stripped the sub-national government of the most viable tax sources and placed them in the hands of the federal government, this to some large extent is responsible state and local government poor financial showing in Nigeria. Even so, the decline use of derivation was also symbolic of the fact that consumption was elevated above production as there was no incentive to produce neither was there any respect to return a fair share to the area where those resources were been produced to repair the considerable environment damage such extract and production had and was causing the environment in the Niger Delta.

Thus, one important fall-out of the centralization of oil revenues is that the importance of derivation as a revenue allocation principle had declined by the beginning of the 1970s; the principle was increasingly put on the back-burner. A very crucial component of the state oil nexus in the Niger Delta is the centralization of petroleum revenues, established as a means of breaking of breaking the erstwhile regional government (IDEA, 2001:246). On the contrary, despite the untold harm been done to the Niger Delta environment by petro-business the Nigerian State has shown itself to be grossly incapable of intervening to protect the Niger Delta environment because of the strong alliance between state and petro-business. To this end Ibeanu, (2008:177) noted that nowhere are the paradox better expressed than in the Niger Delta. Debating the records of the Niger Delta would be an unending enterprise replete with orthodoxies and paradoxes. The neglect for the goose that lay the golden egg result in its significant decay with latter consequences for the rise in militant struggle in the Niger Delta on the one hand and the call for resource control by their governors on the other. This had severe impact on production, state finances, and the economy in general nonetheless, the relational strains that is associated with the general state of insecurity.

Equally not dismissing this fact too, is the fact that the discovery of oil and the subsequent dominance of this subsector as a major revenue earner for the government had led to the abandonment of agriculture which had hitherto play significantly in generating revenue for the Nigerian state. With this twist, the national economy took on a mono-culture character with high dependence on oil revenue. Sadly, there was no corresponding wise re-investment of petro-dollar monies in other sectors of the economy to ensure the diversification of the national economy. Hence, with the faltering international economies, Nigeria's economy had no hiding place or buffer from the severe heat of global economic downturn. Added to the years of misuse of the huge revenues derived from oil, coupled with the government carelessness to tie the loss ends unproductive activities and consumption. Nigeria was no sooner than later at a crossroad for which it could no longer stand the strains of fiscal demand by the public neither could it any longer hide the now visible signs of fiscal ailment. The internal makeshift austerity was on its own a disaster hence, grossly inadequate because of government continued fiscal indiscretion, lack of fiscal discipline and inability to check continuing corruption.

In 1976, the federal abolished the old ineffective native authority for a more modern system of administration at the local level. By this act, the unified local government system was empowered by the law with resources and autonomy to effectively mobilize local resources, engender local participation for local development as a means of achieving national development. However, this intention has not been achieved as a result of the contradictory pattern of engagement resulting from excessive state interference in the affairs of local government. These areas of interference are finances, appointment and promotion of senior staffs of local government, imposition of candidates and most often the removal of non-complying council chairmen and replacing them with caretaker committee subject to the influence of the state governor. Even more abhorring is the upper tier government defining and redefining the function of local authorities without taking into cognizance the competence levels of such local entities. More so, state governors have formed the habit of directly meddling with the funds of local government in the name of control. Juxtaposing the acts of the upper tier government over the lower level government against the argument of Gullick, (1947) that where divergence and local adaption are required, responsibilities should be decentralized with the smallest unit capable of embracing the geographical extent of a problem and able to command the appropriate professional service assuming responsibility (in Sapru, 2008:127). This is a significant refraction of the principles of federal relations and administration which has continued to

fracture the autonomy and undermined local government ability to properly effect development at the local level

#### **4. Paradox of Increasing Dependence and Diminishing Diversification of the Economy.**

In discussing the vexing issue of the depressed and dependent nature of Nigeria's economic and the state, it is needful to look beyond the narrow conception of thought promoted by some scholars premised on the dependency theory. This conception is anchored on the argument that the dependency of the Nigerian economy and by extension the state is a product of imperialism. The question then is what role has the various post-independent leader of this nation endowed with great potential done to undermine those schemes. Equally too, what has been the governance behaviours of our so-called political leadership toward resources mobilization and utilization in government for the promotion of the common good, economic and national development? A cursory look at this dimension of governance from 1960 to date it is easy to dismiss the dependency theory built upon the ECLA intellectual tradition as mere careless terminology, simplistic class analysis, lack of conceptual rigour, and excessive polemics that should be regarded more or less as a tool for interpretation (Lievesley, 2003:146) for which the Asian Tigers Countries have proven to be.

The simple fact is that the Nigerian state has for the past sixty years been ruled as a fiefdom characterized by client-patron network that promoted a rentier economy. Under this structure that is centralized for effective control hence, rather than to manage and deliver public services efficiently self perpetuation in power remain the focus of those in government. Hence, long-term network productive investment was being sacrificed for short-term political gain (Thomson, 2004:204). The authoritarian character of government used all means including cooptation to hold on to power however, gradually, its governance capacity declined to the outright use of force against oppositions. The presumed elections held in Nigeria showed a blatant abuse of the due process with the overwhelming character of vote-buying and rigging as such these elections were nothing closed to free and fair. This process, followed by the intrusiveness of state sponsored corruption further impaired the effectiveness of state control while strengthening the spread of informal economies, web of economic activities that are unmeasured, unrecorded, and in varying degrees, illegal (Schraeder, 2004:189). By and large, these activities did not contribute to the growth of the local nor the national economy, rather it placed a serious strain on the state fiscal operations as it took a significant portion from the state purse.

Due to these practices, the system was opened up in such a way that resources were sucked out of society by government and its cohorts yet the government offered little in return. Hence, the problem by the 1980s and 1990s was that there were no longer enough resources to sustain these networks. The conditions leading to and the actual sorry situation of the Nigeria economy during this period have aptly captured by Obadan and Edo, (2004:16-17). This is thus evident in the fact that the post independent Nigeria over \$600 billion was generated from oil resources without much to show in terms of socio-infrastructure (Iyare, 2008:34). The correlate of government resource misuse and abuse was economic decline and dependence on foreign aid to a point that there was severe erosion of international confidence and creditworthiness on the path of the Nigeria (Obadan and Edo, 2004:17). From here on, the IMF dictated the tune and the dance of adjustment for Nigeria through SAP. Since consumption prevailed over genuine investment which is necessary to boost local production the Nigerian state failed to meet the expectation of development (Thomson, 2004). The outcome of the government gross abuse of state resources was decline as described below by Olukoshi and Hope that:

In Nigerian context, SAP was introduced by the Babangida regime in 1986, when the leading economic indicators were as follows: GNP per capita \$770; the naira was valued at #2 to the Dollar; capacity utilization in manufacturing industries was 40%; and the incidence of poverty was 47%. Which gradually grown to 70%. Sadly the patchy implementation coupled with misplaced priority SAP failed to achieve fundamental results and especially failed to address the problems of unemployment, famine, and malnutrition, corruption, poverty, socio-economic inequalities; rather they worsened socio-economic conditions and created political and civil strife (in Jega, 2007:173&174).

The improper and shady manner the state has conducted the implementation of the SAP principle has continued to inflict severely on the citizenry and the national economy thus further imprinting on the minds of the populace that the Nigerian state does not have any good to offer the common man rather the selfish distribution of state resources among the ruling elites.

#### **5. Paradox of a Renewed Democracy yet Increasing Conflict and Corruption.**

Democracy remains a standing governance institution the world over however, the abuse has been inflicted upon it in Nigeria has undermined its value as a system of government that assures the liberty, incorporation of the needs of everybody in the polity and guarantee the people of the genuineness of government to provide for and protect the common good. During the era of military government it was a fact that the military administrators were good at promising but bad at fulfilling those promises. Hence, under successive military regimes, the state had failed to stabilize the polity, secure the citizens and provide the basic socioeconomic needs of the majority of the people. Given that context, many believed that democracy was going to immediately cure all of Nigeria's

ills, bring about security and stability, and re-launch the nation on the path of sustainable socioeconomic development (Jega, 2007:166).

By the continuing refraction of due processes, development to the ordinary Nigerian is still a tall belief and dream that is berth ashore in a distant coast. Equally strengthening this view is the magnitude of executive corruption which has been swept under the carpet (Iyare, 2008). Given over one decade of the application of democratic rule the state of public infrastructures have not significantly improve nor changed compared against the huge yearly budgetary allocation set aside for their improvement. Hence, the absence of good governance is glaring (Iyare, 2008:33) given the massive corruption and looting of public treasury leading to the criminalization of the state (Ibeanu, 2008:177). This state of affairs in Nigeria may in some significant way shatter the held believe that there is a positive correlation between democracy and development. Holding to that notion means adding a caveat that there could be a correlation between the two concepts depending on the moral characters of those at the helm of affairs of state administration who are committed to the common good.

In Nigeria, particularly in government, the collapse of values, ethics and morality also strikes at the heart of abrasive corruption which in turn dwarfs or reverses the process of development (Iyare, 2008:27). The public opposition to the government present fuel subsidy removal is a testament to the look askance the populace have towards the sincerity of the state to sacrificially act in the peoples good. This is against the re-echoing promise by government that it intend to reinvest the proceeds from subsidy discontinuity into critical areas of the economy that will spur up the economy for growth and development beneficial to all at the end of it all. The inability of the government to assuage the fears of the people is derived from the shady and unholy manner the state had conducted previous stages of the privatization programme that has continued to generate hardship for ordinary Nigerians. Thus, the lack of accountability in the conduct of state affair has remained sore point of disagreement and distrust between government and citizens as civil society in Nigeria.

The increasing conflict of distrust at both organizational, inter-group relations and from the significant majority of the Nigerian society towards government and its policies have given rise to crisis. the persistent crises have blocked, slowed, halted and reversed socio-economic development, with result that the much-touted positive correlation between democracy and development appears to be very tenuous indeed (Jega, 2007:169). The prevailing ethno-religious (political) conflict (The Nation Monday, November 7, 2011) is due primarily from the grand design by some to ensure that government fails or gain recognition, while on the part of the state, it is as a result of government unwillingness to prosecute but rather compensating those involved in fuelling such costly conflicts (The Nation Monday, November 7, 2011). Equally too the symbolic exclusion of civil society in decision-making on matters significantly affect them have played to rising conflicts.

The continuing cacophony between organized labour during Obasanjo's regime (although the breached relationship between the two had began during Babangida's regime) that have spilled over to this period attest to the state of relationship characterized by single high-handedness, lack of trust and disrespect on the part of the government towards civil society in Nigeria. This has resulted in the general distrust by civil society of government sincerity due to the government deliberate infractions or failure to fulfill her own part of agreement entered into with some association like Academic Staff Union of Nigerian University (ASUU) and the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC).

This distrust is also reflected on the present policy of government to discontinue the subsidy on premium motor spirit (PMS) to raise monies for development purpose given the government inability to check its abuse and misuse of public resources neither punished those involved. The implications of these paradoxes on the people, economy and the nation is the wide spread stagnation or decline in growth rate of GDP, decline in GNP per capita, declining rate of return to investment and increased unequal terms of trade. It is also illustrated by the high percentage of population below the poverty line and the widening gap in income inequalities (Jega, 2007:172). At the moment it is estimated that about one million Nigerian are living below the poverty line of less than a dollar per day despite the encouraging figures of economic growth (BBC News Report February 13, 2012).

## **6. Concluding Remark.**

Decentralization is a standing pattern of organizational arrangement that presents collectives (with seemingly irreconcilable diversity in terms of culture, religious and traditional practices, yet willingly agreeing to stay together as one entity) a model of structuring that allows a significant degree of liberty to all sections while identifying with a single central authority without infringe on the rights and liberties of any one group. The essence of such devolution is to strengthen the character of popular participation, political control by the citizenry and accountability by the governor to the governed anchored on the abiding principles of political, fiscal and institutional decentralization. These dimensionalities are meant to be operated interdependently for it to produce the outcomes of effectiveness, responsiveness and sustainability of the system with minimal distrust and contradictions that tend to inflict severely on genuine systemprogress.

These contradictions show themselves in the misapplication of power-relation with resultant confusion and conflict of roles between and among units even where the constitution is clear, arbitrariness and zany rules,

disrespect for the right and liberties of opposing groups, corruption and the neglect of the rule of law. Under this kind of governance and administrative atmosphere, the adjudicative system and process have become extremely bias, unfair, and unjust. Equally too, accountability of governance to the citizenry remains sketchy and patchy with due processes often dislocated and popular citizenship participation significantly negated. The abuse of the principle of decentralization has birthed in Nigeria the paradox of centralization in decentralized in federal system, paradox of increasing dependence and diminishing diversification of the economy in an endowed society, and renewed democracy yet continuing paradox of conflict and corruption.

This paper therefore holds that unless the true character of political, fiscal and institutional decentralization are applied in a manner that continually strengthen their inter-linkages can the Nigeria state undo these challenging paradox with visible evidence in governance effectiveness, responsiveness and genuine citizenship engagement focused at economic rejuvenation, national growth and development. This is because as Ostrom and Ostrom, (1971) noted decentralization as a form of public organization is a means for allocating decision-making capabilities in order to provide public goods and services responsive to the preferences of individuals in different social contexts. (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2009:175). The fundamental principle espoused in this observation should be one of the guiding condition and a defining variable for building better relations in Nigeria that redirect governance in a manner that effect development and reduce poverty.

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