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An Afro-Communal Ethic for Good Governance

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Abstract: The underdevelopment of most African states and the attendant poverty and general social disorder that characterize her polity, is a product of failure of leadership. The hydra-headed monster of corruption and tribal politics seem to have a crippling hold on most states in the continent. These ugly narratives have occasioned the need and the increasing clamor and agitations for good governance. However, in order to address the problem of crises of governance in Nigeria for instance, economic, political and constitutional restructuring to true federalism appear to have been proposed as a solution to all of her problems. As helpful as this proposal may be, I argue that something more fundamental and enduring is needed which is an ethic of identity and solidarity grounded in Afro-communitarianism. As an Afro-communal ethic, identity and solidarity cultivates and promotes the virtues of love, care, complementarity, justice, equity, fairness and patriotism in governance practices. Using the Philosophical methods of critical analysis and synthesis of the current realities of most African States, I argue that the above mentioned virtues are lacking in the governance practices of most sub-Saharan African states and that the lack of these virtues has given rise to tribal, ethnic, ineptitude and corrupt politics/leadership.

Keywords: good governance; leadership; communalism; relationality; complementarity

A) Introduction

Although there probably never was an originating social contract historically, however over the years the world has understood governance as an expression of a partnership, a contract between the government (the state) and the people (the led)

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such that there is increasing expectation on the part of government to respect the terms of the contract and be responsible in providing good governance for the common good of all. To this end, the people will always be willing to cede their individual independence and powers to the government in exchange for good life for the people – that is, in taking care of their needs and the protection of their rights. The failure to provide these needs and protect the rights of the people crystalizes a failure of leadership and consequent failure of governance. This is true of most African states.

Many African states are increasingly being perceived and categorized (by her peoples) as failed states. Responsible for this failure is the failure of leadership. Ineptitude and corrupt leadership and docile and corrupt followership, it is agreed, have become the bane of development and good governance in sub-Saharan Africa. Theophilus Okere (2004, p. 4) describes this recurrent African narrative as a tragedy thus, "… elsewhere in Africa where there is no shooting war, you probably have some form of reign of terror – insecurity of life and property, armed robbery and hired assassinations, thousands of riot-ready, unemployed youth. For the rest, the whole continent enjoys the unenviable distinction of being the underdevelopment capital of the world, the unemployment capital of the world, the poverty continent, and the AIDS continent, the misery zone". Further Okere states that "the entire map is littered with the debris of rogue states, failed governments, violent successions, coup villains and victims, violently repressed secessions, interminable wars, interminable rows of wandering refugees, endemic diseases, endemic poverty, helpless debt burdens, ugly slums et cetera". Okere believes that the situation would have been taken care of by good governance (2004, p. 4).

In Nigeria for instance, the failure of leadership has reached the level where the country has been described as the poverty capital of the world and also as one of the most corrupt nations of the world by Transparency International. These descriptions appear to be uncontested and uncontestable given the visible cases of poverty in the country and mind-blowing cases of corruption in various agencies and ministries of government: from NDDC, NNPC, FIRS to EFCC, NEDC, Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs just to mention a few.

The failure of leadership that crystalizes in bad governance is so endemic and pandemic that it cuts across the three tiers of government – local, state and federal. All these and more put together are responsible for various and increasing agitations and clamor for separation on one hand by certain tribes from the contraption called

Nigeria, and agitation for restructuring to reflect true federalism on the other hand by those who still want the unity of the country.

Be that as it may, I will argue in this paper that given the fact that leadership failure in Nigeria is deep seated and cuts across all levels of government and strata of society across tribes, ethnicity and religion, the dissolution of the country will not solve the problem of ineptitude and corrupt leadership. On the other hand, the restructuring of the country into what is popularly known as true federalism may not solve the leadership failure in Nigeria as such. As much as it is desirable for Nigeria to be restructured into a true federal state with its attendant promises and prospects for good governance, I will argue that much may not change in favour of good governance for the reasons that the same crop of leaders we have today may still mount the saddle of leadership in their various regions or the federating units given the disconnect or dichotomy between structure and personalities in governance.

In offering a philosophical and thus more fundamental requirement for good governance in Nigeria in particular and sub-Saharan Africa generally, I will propose an ethic for good governance located within the Afro-communal/moral intuitions of identity and solidarity. Although some scholars have accused Afro-communitarianism of being exclusionary and thus cannot ground the well fare and well-being of all in the community (Oyowe & Yurkivska, 2014), I will argue the contrary that Afro-communitarianism is inclusive based on moral status as characterizing personhood.

B) The Nature of Man's Socio-political Life

From the perspectives of John Locke's Two Treatises of Government, there are two foundations that define man's socio-political life. One of such foundations is the reality of the sociality of life that is definitive of the human person. This re-echoes the communitarian nature of life in African ontology. This is accentuated by people's desire to come together for the purpose of achieving the best out of life. The testimony of this abound in most African societies (both traditional and modern) where the people from various associations and peer groups to protect their interest and further their course. Following from this is the second foundation which is the desire to form a common government which must be loyal to the people as sovereignty lies with the people as a whole (Iroegbu, 2000). In this kind of socio-political arrangement with such sense of communality, the goods of the earth belong to everyone in common (Locke, 1690). African sense of Land shows that Land and

all its environment is ultimately communally owned and a resource to be communally shared (Behrens, 2012).

Based on this, the commonwealth must ensure the promotion of the common good for all to benefit. To do this, the commonwealth must be guided by the rule of law, the principle of equality before the law in other to avoid appropriating certain undue advantages to themselves at the expense of the generality of the people to whom they run the government in trust. Re-echoing the thoughts of Locke on the commonness of the goods of the earth, Iroegbu asks:

If the earth belongs to all of us in common, if nobody has any legitimate claim to have more of the earth than others as none was born with the earth or some parts of it in his stomach, two facts face us at this point. First, how do we ensure good leadership that will guarantee the common good of all? Secondly, since the earth belongs to all in common, how do we justify, if at all, any private ownership of property either by the rulers or by the ruled? (2000, p. 5).

 In responding to the two questions raised in the above excerpt, Iroegbu appeals to Locke and Bill Jordan. Concerning the justification of any private ownership of property, Locke argues that although God gave us the earth in common, He (God) also gave us reasons to make use of it to our advantage in appropriating life's convenience. This is done when an individual applies his labour to earth's goods. The extra labour done by the individual removes the property from the earth's goods and makes it his/hers (Locke, 1690). This justifies the reality and the ownership of private property. However, this poses a problematic to the vision of forming a common government; to the ideal and goal of the advancement of common good.

It is a common knowledge that we are not all endowed equally with reason or rational capabilities. If how much goods we appropriate to ourselves depends largely on our talented productivities and ingenuities, then the consequences are obvious – the yawning gap between and among individuals in the possession of earth's goods. The same is true between and among nations. The reality is that some individuals are wealthy, super wealthy while others are poor, miserably poor. The same is true of nations.

The further consequence of this is the exploitation of the poor and the weak by the rich. Where this is allowed a free reign, the rich and the very powerful can highjack the apparatus of state machinery (the government) to cow and oppress the poor. In such instance, life for the oppressed poor becomes void of meaning and dignity. This

is itself a far cry from the vision of sociality and the formation of a common government.

In an attempt to contribute a solution to this problematic, Bill Jordan wrote his celebrated book titled, "The Common Good" where he criticized extreme liberal market economy which amounts to the deterioration of quality of life for all (Jordan, 1989). Note that the civil society is created to galvanize the interests of all vis-à-vis the earth's resources for the improvement of the quality of life for all. According to Jordan, a free and liberal market economy creates and perpetuates an economy and politics of exclusion where the majority of the masses are excluded from participation in the life of the community based on the non-possession of the material wherewithal to do so. They consequently lose their voice and become helplessly subservient to the rich and the powerful who perpetually make them worse-off. This is an exclusion of persons and groups in a society that was founded to care for and integrate all its members into substantive participation (Jordan, 1989; Iroegbu, 2000). As a solution to this, Jordan calls for a democracy based on common interest, a necessary redistribution and fairness, efficiency and flexibility in the public sector and a basic income that will constitute the first step towards a new version of the good society. According to Jordan, this will generate a better quality of life (Jordan, 1989).

Be that as it may, Jordan fails to tell us in concrete terms how this solution will be effected and effective. Thus the need for the next section of this paper where I propose the ethic of identity and solidarity as a viable option for good governance.

C) The Ethic of Identity and Solidarity

Thaddaeus Metz had earlier used the idea of identity and solidarity in his work, "Towards a Theory of Moral Status" to express degrees of moral status of beings. According to him, persons who have capacity for identity and solidarity (that is to show love and friendship and to receive same) in communal relationships have moral status and those who do not are not subject of moral appraisal (Metz, 2010). For Metz, most human beings are not only subjects of love and friendship but also objects of it (2010; 2014). However, I do not intend to use the terms here as a basis for the qualification of moral status of beings rather I use them to express belongingness, sympathy/empathy, concern and care required in the relational context of communal relationships for good governance from those who hold public offices or handlers of government.

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Identity bespeaks of what defines me or what makes me who I am. Ontologically, I am constituted both by individuality and sociality. To this end, Mbiti's maxim that, "I am because we are and since we are, therefore, I am" and Eze's insistence that, "my subjectivity is in part constituted by other persons with whom I share the social world" are very germane in understanding identity (Mbiti, 1969; Eze, 2008). So William James' definition of the "me" is a good answer to the question of who I am. James writes that, "in its widest possible sense, a man's me is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account…" (1892, p. 177). Therefore, the identification of one's self is not only with one's individual physical and psychological characteristics but also with Significant others, groups, or social categories, material objects and places. Identity as I use it here, therefore means seeing oneself as a part of a larger whole, a point within a circle and that outside the whole or the circle, I am not complete. I need therefore to always identify with the whole as that which completes me.

Solidarity, on the other hand, is the practical aspect of the cognition of identity. Cognizing the reality of the relationality or communality of our existence is one thing, and concretizing this cognition is another. However, the former is the basis for the later. Solidarity is the ability to *empathize* and care to improve the quality of other's life for non-instrumental reasons (Metz, 2009, p. 51 emphasis mine). Solidarity is the ability to act, motivated by goodwill or sympathetic considerations for the sake of another's wellbeing (Metz, 2007; 2012). Solidarity entails giving people the wherewithal to realize their legitimate life longings. From the perspective of good governance within a political setting, people should be provided with the wherewithal – rational, economic and sufficient for each person to live reasonably as a human being. This is not a matter of charity but of justice because the land (whether seen from Lockean perspective or African communalism) is given to us in common and thus grants all a common parameter of a decent life (Okadigbo, 1996; Iroegbu, 1996; 2000).

The above conceptualization of identity and solidarity shows a nexus between the two requisite for the realization of common good. In identity, we share a common way of life (cultural identity), we belong to each other (ontological identity) and together we belong to the community (state/country) and the community with all its benefits and burden belongs to all of us. In solidarity we commonly share in the resources of the community, that is, we receive the wherewithal to live at least a

minimally decent life. Anything short of this is a call to alienation. Alienation erodes the being and the dignity of humanity. According to Iroegbu (2000, p. 12), "…alienation is the purposeful neglect or abandonment of the person – not caring again about her. It is more than hatred, for the hated can still live and when attacked defend herself. But the alienated has no chance, no opportunity to live. Alienation removes the being at once and totally: spirit and body. It reduces her to the lowest cadre of reality, at times radically to non-reality. It makes a human being into a being-unto-death…".

In the ethic of identity and solidarity espoused above, complementary rationality defines the relationship that should exist among people and between the people and the community/state and its handlers. Without this complementarity, the varying units will find it difficult to **identify** and **solidarize** with one another and with each other as the case may be.

At this juncture, since I have located the ethic of identity and solidarity within Afro-communitarianism, I will make a case for Afro-communitarianism to the effect that it favours and guarantees the well-being of all – a community-centered humane society (Wiredu, 1996; Tutu, 1999; Masolo, 2004; Metz, 2007). Contrary to the accusation that Afro-communitarianism is exclusionary and thus does not guarantee equality and egalitarianism (Oyowe & Yurkivska, 2014), I will argue that it is inclusive. In particular, I will respond to Oyowe. Oyowe's argument that Afro-communitarianism is gender insensitive thus promoting patriarchy on the basis that the word "he" or "man" is extensively used in the literature is to me not convincing enough. It was just a way of writing as at the time the literatures published, just as nowadays the fashionable way of writing (for the sake of gender sensitivity) is to use the pronoun "she" to represent both genders. Afro-communitarianism is inclusive to the extent that it recognizes the humanity and equal respect for persons irrespective of their gender (Wiredu, 1996; Amadiume, 1987). There is egalitarianism and equality of both sexes not in terms of strength and social roles but in terms of moral worthness and also in the sense that they are seen as partners in progress or as complementarities in social formation and well-being – behind a successful man is a woman of virtue. This is not to say that there is no case(s) of gender insensitivity in traditional African society and even in modern African society.

Again, their (the women folk) worth and value is recognized in the sense that they are seen as agents of stability and success of homes. For instance, in Igbo traditional society, whereas the male folks are seen as providers of wealth, the female folks are seen as the "care takers" and "stabilizers" of the wealth, thus such names as *odozi*

aku, and where they are not available overtly or covertly, the sustainability of such wealth is not guaranteed. This is not to say that they (female folks) cannot make or create wealth. They do and much more, thus such persons as female husbands in traditional Igbo society (Amadiume, 1987).

Oyowe completely denies the gender neutrality of African personhood. But I think Oyowe is not completely right neither is he completely wrong. What should rather be said is that ontologically African personhood is gender-neutral but socially or normatively, African personhood is gendered based on differences in social roles between the genders. Be that as it may, complementarity in roles is encouraged where necessary and practicable (Wiredu, 1996, 2005; Gyekye, 1992; Gbadegesin, 2003; Masolo, 2004). My position is that Afro-communitarianism is inclusive and thus pursues and guarantees the vision of a humane society based on moral status as the ground for African personhood. Moral status is a function of possession of certain ontological features. However, the ground for recognition, respect and protection is not based on the practicality of these features but on the mere possession of them. In other words, respect and rights flow towards the possession of the relevant ontological features and not their use. Since the respect in question is a function of mere possession, it follows that this respect in question is not earned and thus should be given equally since it is a response to a possession of the relevant ontological property – part of this property is the possession of moral obligation towards fellow being or towards the community (Toscano, 2011). Since everyone in the community (men, women, albinos, people with disability etc.) possess this property, they are all subject of respect and dignity. The above ethic therefore accommodates them and applies to them.

D) Leadership and Governance

Leadership and governance are interconnected. While governance is both a process and a goal, leadership is mainly a skill and a process through which the goal is achieved. Governance is the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs. Governance is also seen as a process of exercising political, economic and administrative authority, especially over a state. As a concept central to democracy, governance refers to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment and broad-based participation (Imoukhnede, 2016). The concept of governance embodies mechanisms, processes and institutions

through which citizens articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences (Okeke, 2010). Very apposite is the meaning of governance given by MO Ibrahim Foundation which sees governance as the provision of the political, social and economic goods that citizens have the right to expect from their state and the responsibility of the state to deliver same to their citizens (Ibrahim, 2016). Therefore, the ability of the state to harness available natural potentials and resources both internal and external to manage her affairs for the common good of all is what good governance entails.

On the other hand, leadership is the skills and processes that go into the realization of this goal. Without quality leadership the goal of governance which is the common good of the people will not be achieved. A leader, therefore, is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization's mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives. The leader achieves this influence by humbly conveying a prophetic vision of the future in clear terms that resonates with the follower(s) beliefs and values in such a way that the follower(s) can understand and interpret the future into present-time action steps (Winston, 2006, p. 7). In achieving the goals of governance, the leader leads, organizes and galvanizes both human, material and non-material resources for common good of all. To do all of this, the leader must be able to identify and solidarize with the people in leading them out of pain to gain; out of poverty to prosperity; out of uncertainty to certainty; out of chaos to peace.

Leadership therefore requires necessary knowledge. Indeed, knowledge is a virtue in leadership. By knowledge, I do not necessarily mean academic knowledge (though it is not unimportant) but knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses, joys and pains, trials and challenges of a people. A leader must clearly understand and be acquainted with the past and the present of her people so as to envision a future for them. To do this, she must identify with them, constantly interact and consult with them. To this end, leadership requires necessary training which prepares one to deliver quality and good governance. Plato's idea of the "best man" is a critical element in leadership. Part of what makes the "best man" is one's capacity for identification and solidarity exhibited as a life's style in one's life through time and not a sudden show of philanthropy for the purpose of election into political offices. The virtue of the ethic of identity and solidarity helps a leader to understand on one hand the challenges of

her people, and on the other hand, to share in these challenges in solidarity with the people.

Thus, agreeing with Plato, I state that ruling is a skill that must be learnt and nurtured. According to Falaiye, "it is only in politics and leadership that people spontaneously claim to be qualified. I shudder at the idea of some nitwit claiming that he/she has a revelation to be addressed and accepted as a medical doctor or lawyer or even a physicist without training" (2012, pp. 25-26). Therefore, until we discourage "money-bag politics" where some people who suddenly made money, by whatever means, decide to go into politics, not necessarily to provide service to the people, but perhaps to use their money to get more money without a proven record of identity and solidarity as a long standing virtue.

E) Ethic of Identity and Solidarity and the Demands of Good Governance

An attitude and a life style of self-centeredness vitiates good governance. It makes possible the evil of corruption and massive looting of public treasury (by officers of the state) that is characteristic of many governments in Africa. The failure of governance in Africa lies at the root of individualism and individualistic tendencies – public office holders go into public office to serve personal interests. Until this trend is reversed, good governance will be an impossible dream to achieve in Africa. Contrary to this, a communal sense of identity and solidarity lies at the heart of African ethics, human well-being and thus good governance (O'Neil, 1993; Behrens, 2012). Understanding the fact that the general environment and its resources (the Land) is something that is not individually owned but shared on the basis of relationality and communality encourages and promotes the sense of identity and solidarity conducive for good governance.

Access or entitlement to (dividends of) good governance is not a right defined by political affiliation, tribe, religion, ethnicity or familial proximity to who occupies the seat of government or who overseas State resources. Rather, entitlement to good governance is a right we all have by virtue of our common ownership of the natural environment and its resources, and the best way to avail everyone this right is through the ethic of identity and solidarity believed in and practiced by the overseers of State resources – the resources of our commonly owned natural environment (the Land). To this end, the natural environment and its resources must be seen as a shared inheritance of the State as a whole and not only of our family, cronies or proximate relationships.

Acting outside this ethic undermines public good and in turn undermines also the individual's good. This is because individual good is a part whereas the public good is the whole. Undermining the whole invariably vitiates the part. This is a tragic paradox in human existential situation. A situation where an actor ignorantly undertakes those things that eventually subverts her interest. For instance, a government official who is excessively selfish thinks she is acting for the betterment of her own position and comfort unknown to her that what it takes to preserve private interest at the exclusion of the interest of others, is what it takes to undermine the same interest she is pursuing. A situation where a state official embezzles money and resources meant to provide welfare and employment for the people, she is directly and indirectly creating insecurity that may eventually engulf her and members of her family through rape, kidnapping, armed robbery, assassination and the current #ENDSARS, #ENDPOLICE BRUTALITY and #END BAD GOVERNANCE protests that have engulfed the Nigerian State and the consequent looting and destruction of businesses, houses and properties belonging to some political elites – a kind of a boomerang effect that reinstates natural justice. An Igbo adage, *egbe bere ugo bere nke si ibeya ebena nku kwapuya (literally translated as: let the eagle perch and let the kite perch, whichever that says the other should not perch must forcefully lose its wings)* captures this. In communalistic complementary life world, any unit that makes life difficult for the other, has inadvertently created the necessary conditions for the severance of its own existence after all *he who fetches insects-infected firewood has invited lizards for a feast*. Therefore, acting within the ethic of identity and solidarity fosters and promotes common good requisite for social order, peaceful environment and coexistence.

But the virtue and capacity for identity and solidarity cannot be developed without evolving effective strategy towards self -control. As described by Thomas Hobbes, human beings are ontologically egoistic and depraved. On the other hand, Rousseau claims that humans are ontologically good and perfect. However, none of the two extreme positions is entirely true. What is true is that humans are good but have the tendency to be evil; they are benevolent but can also manifest egoistic tendencies. This is the existential paradox of being human. Be that as it may, to achieve good governance, state officers and indeed all human beings, are expected to exercise personal sovereignty over self (self-control) through positive self-knowledge and affirmation. Socrates long before now has invited us to "know ourselves" and through this knowledge, Plato advocates for the control of reason over our appetites.

Self-control enhances the complementarity of self-interest and community interest (common good). The recognition and promotion of the nexus between personal interests and common good by officers of the state is what, among other things, ensures good governance. To ensure good governance, a political actor must be guided with the complementary existential knowledge that she is not alone; that she lives in an ambience that is ontologically communocratic. Asousu corroborates this idea when he writes that,

…to be is nothing other than the capacity of being-in-control of our tension laden existential situation in the process of which the thinking subject realizes the need to define its interest with the context of all missing links of reality. It is when those entrusted with the affairs of state come to realize that to be is not to be for themselves alone but to exercise existence within the framework of all missing links that the legitimacy bestowed by authority has its full force. The same can be said of the expectation directed towards those in authority and those subject to authority whose beings form a mutual complementary link (2007, p. 199).

The ethic of identity and solidarity deepens the value of complementary totalizing mindset and minimizes the individualized atomistic mode of rationality that enthrones selfishness and makes private interest an absolute pursuit. In Igbo communalistic ethos, the (Igwe's) Palace is the seat of government of the community and it is called *òbí-oha* – the palace for all. *òbí* (palace), *oha* (community). The palace (including its administrative head, the Igwe) represents a totalizing mindset (*óbì-oha* – a heart for all), that is a large heart that identifies, accommodates, solidarizes with ALL for the common good of the entire community. This communalistic complementary mode of rationality frowns at individualized atomistic mode of thinking that makes caring for others difficult and consequently makes good governance impossible. Where and when the individualized atomistic mode of thinking is in control, the tendency is that actors will always tend to pursue their own personal interests and the interests of their proximate relationships against the interests of the larger community/state as the case may be. Accordingly, it is for this reason that such mindset adheres strictly to what Asousu calls the super-maxim "the nearer the better and the safer". The negative formulation of this super-maxim reads: the more removed a thing is from our intimate region of belongingness, our immediate neighbourhood, our ethnic and tribal world for example, the less are we obliged to it and the more it is allowed to be exploited freely and with impunity for our own survival, and in this case even without remorse (Asousu, 2007, p. 206).

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It does not require rocket science to see that this exclusivist mentality often manifests itself in governance in most (if not all) Sub-Saharan African states which makes nepotism and corruption endemic in this part of the continent. The consequences of this is the rising waves of crime, cries of marginalization, agitations for separation and self-determination et cetera. The ethic of identity and solidarity, espoused above, as an Afro-communal framework for good governance captures and respects the ethos of communiatarianism that is inclusive of general human community based on the recognition of the humanity of all including those that do not have immediate and proximate relationship to the community but who are nonetheless accommodated by the community based on their humanity and as it were members of the world community. This is the right meaning of communitarianism and anything short of this is communitarianism wrongly conceived and applied.

Be that as it may, in most contemporary African countries, communitarianism seems to have been wrongly understood and applied to justify clannishness and tribalism. In this vein, Asouzu remarks that "in most contemporary African countries, what is understood as communalism when carefully considered, are diverse brands of tribal social arrangements designed to protect private and group interests against all forms of outside intrusion. Within this framework, even fellow Africans, who are normally seen as belonging to the same racial group, are often targeted for the meanest and most severe forms of discrimination due to their tribal affiliations. In this problematic sense, tribalism and communalism (*wrongly conceived* – emphasis mine) share certain things in common as they have a very important moment of discrimination that is targeted against outsiders or those we consider as not belonging to the inner circle" (2007, p. 210). Recent happenings in some African states such as Xenophobic attacks in South Africa, sheer tribal sentiments against Nigerians doing business in Ghana and a high level of nepotism in Nigeria under the administration of President Muhammed Buhari (as many Nigerians perceive and allege) are testimonies to this erroneous understanding of communalism. Unfortunately, so, this is definitive of many political actors in most African states where these actors act out of communalistic and tribal consciousness in discriminating against outsiders. Guided by the highly misunderstood and overhaul-worthy maxim of the nearer the better and the safer, they assume that their proximate and familial relationships of kith and kin are the best, the wisest and the safest to be trusted and based on this, are given undue advantages by making them better-off and others, outside their highly restricted and hegemonic familial and proximate matrix of relationships, worse-off.

This is how Asouzu (2007, p. 211) captures it when he states that, "in such situations, actors assume that those nearest to them are the best human beings, and as such, they are the safest. It is based on this near irrational assumption that an actor is instinctively drawn to those closest to him, to the inner circle of the family, to its communal people, to its kith and kin, to its tribal people, to the clan, to its town people, to people from its provinces and local governments etc., imagining these to be the safest, the best and the wisest". But even if those nearest to us are, in some cases better and safer, it is a fallacy to think that they are always so in all cases.

This mentality, it has been alleged, has manifested itself in various government appointments to key positions in Nigeria under the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari where over 80% of these appointments are to his kith and kin and in defending this act of tribal and clannish politics, President Buhari has always unrepentantly maintained that these are the people he can trust and thus safe with. This type of mentality is capable of doing two things in any state where such obtains. One, at worst, it generates suspicion, ethnic sentiments and cold war between and among the federating tribal units, cries of marginalization, demands for separation and agitation for self-determination, protests and counter protests. Two, at "best", there may not be pronounced wars, clashes and protests or even agitations for self-determination, but it creates in the psyche of the people a "standing (rotating) fan philosophy". A standing (rotating) fan "blows air" to the occupants of a room at different intervals "turn by turn". So nobody is bothered when it is not her turn for the air to reach her knowing fully well that at her own turn, she would get a full dose of the air "blown" by the fan. This is the idea of a standing (rotating) fan philosophy.

Where such a philosophy defines the politics of a nation, the different units or regions of the nation (for instance, Nigeria) earnestly at different intervals wait for their turn to take a full dose or plunder the resources of the nation – a kind of sharing the national cake. Unfortunately, this kind of politics does not and cannot bring about even development, equity and justice because of the human ambivalence and tendency to outdo others and appropriate most if not all the resources of the nation to themselves alone. Whether it is one or two above, the result is the same – selfishness which is anti-thetical to good governance and general social order. This debased form of communalism is the very foundation for retrogression, stagnation and incessant conflicts in Africa today (Asouzu, 2007, p. 211). Most democratic African states (including Nigeria) today suffer the consequences of this debased form of communalism, this tribal and hegemonic politics that at the end of the day, throws up inefficiency, ineptitude, selfishness and corruption at unimaginable heights.

Therefore, such maxims are overhaul-worthy and must be replaced with a more but real communalistic and all-inclusive maxim. A maxim that while recognizing the specialty of proximate and familial relationships, goes beyond these relationships to recognize and accommodate the humanity, the expectations, the needs, the challenges and the pains of other non-proximate relationships, that is, the larger community, the world community. In this enwisdomised socio-ethical framework for good governance, the super maxim of the nearer the better and the safer (nepotism/selfishness) ought to be replaced with a more extensive, inclusive and other-regarding maxim of "charity begins at home".

"Charity begins at home" is an African ethic for good conduct and wholesome human coexistence. It is an all-inclusive and other-regarding ethic. Although, it may prioritize the goods and the comfort of one's familial and proximate considerations but because of its capacity to reach out and go beyond these proximities, it is complementarily comprehensive in its rationality. The full rendition of this maxim is that "charity begins at home but does not end at home" "charity begins at home" accommodates the extant maxims like: *ugboguru miaram miara nwunye dim* (let the pumpkin grow for me and also grow for my co-wife), *eme nwa ka emere ibe ya obi adiya mma* (literally means what is good for the goose is also good for the gander). Charity begins at home recognizes and promotes the Principle of Permeable Boundaries (PPB). PPB validates the fact that there exists a boundary between those within the circle of special relationship and those outside of them. But the principle also states that the "boundary(s) in question is permeable which allows the extension of Ubuntu to those who would ordinarily be considered "outsiders" (Molefe, 2016, p. 113; Ramose, 2003, p. 330). Molefe further captures this very succinctly when he writes that:

A moral agent must be recognized that she is not only her own person and a member of a family; moreover, she is also a member of different communities: her tribe, nations, country, continent and the world. It is for this reason that her moral sensibility and sensitivity must be as wide as the world. Simply put, though she has immediate duty to herself and family, all things equal, she also has duty to the community at large (2016, p. 114).

The above excerpt and extant African maxims reject nepotistic tendencies and practices as unethical. Mogobe Ramose who is arguably one of the most prominent expounders of African moral beliefs, as the true son of Africa, better argues for the above claim when he opines that criticisms on the basis of nepotism are legitimate

since no single family or community has the right to subsistence by way of denying the same right to others (2003, p. 330).

Therefore, the maxim of charity begins at home thrives on the virtue of a "large heart", that is being large- hearted. Indeed, the world is not sufficient (uwa-ezu-oke) but some are better than others nonetheless. Nature itself is not equilibrated – some are blessed with much, some have little and some appear to have nothing. Be that as it may, nature has given us the capacity to tend our world and make it a better or a safe place through a conscious, concerted complementary efforts for the well-being of all. And this is made possible through the virtue of comprehensive complementary mindset (óbì-oha), *óbì* means heart while *oha* means crowd, the generality of the community, *óbì-oha* thus means the heart that goes after the generality of the community as against the heart that thinks of her own self alone. *Obì-oha* identifies with others and shares in their being (joys, pains, challenges and burdens).

The position I hold and defend in this work is that the ethic of identity and solidarity, without prejudice to other proposals earlier made in the literature for good governance, is more fundamental a solution to the quest for good governance in Nigeria an indeed the Sub-Saharan Africa. To this end therefore, the clamour and agitation for restructuring to true federalism by many in Nigeria or agitations for self-determination by some ethnic nationalities who allege marginalization, cannot ultimately solve the problem of bad leadership or governance in Nigeria. I make this claim because all the regions and ethnic groups that make up the Nigeria state have their own share of inept and corrupt politicians, that is, ineptitude and corrupt leadership cuts across all the sections of the country therefore whether the country is divided into regional governments, the same crop of politicians "raping" the country are likely to be the same politicians that will run the government of their various regions. A good and handy example are the cases of corruption that are seen in regional-based commissions/ministries like Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Niger Delta Ministry (NDM), North-East Development Commission (NEDC) et cetera. These are regional-based commissions and ministry administered by the people from the various regions where these commissions are located and situated.

Therefore, as good as restructuring to true federalism is, all efforts at fixing the politics or governance of the country should not be about restructuring or self-determination alone. Much more effort or attention should be focused on training or schooling the current and intending politicians and all officers of the state on the right culture and ethic for good governance which among other things revolve

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fundamentally around the ethic of identity and solidarity. This claim underscores the underlying nexus between structures and personalities in governance.

To achieve good governance, there is need for complementarity between personalities and structures. In a situation where there are "good persons" as officers of the state but without necessary and good structures, the delivery of good governance may be compromised. On the other hand, where there are necessary and good structures (strong institutions) but lack of "good persons", good governance will still be compromised because man, being what he is, needs checks and balances. In this regard, I argue that given the corrupt tendencies of Nigerian politicians, if for instance, there is an understanding between America and Nigeria to swap their politicians and administrators of the state to govern their countries, America under the administration of most Nigerian politicians will within few months, at most, be raped economically and politically whereas, Nigeria under the administration of American politicians and administrators, is likely to pick up positively economically, socially and politically albeit with some difficulties occasioned by inadequate or bad structures. In this regard, whatever progress that will be made in moving the Nigerian state forward, will be credited to the "good personalities" of American politicians and administrators who will, despite inadequate or bad structures, find a way to work around the structures to provide good governance for the people in fulfilment of their oath of office.

This goes to show that there is a nexus between structures and personalities in governance. Good governance requires that serious efforts be made in building good structures and strong institutions on one hand and good personalities on the other hand. But I must add that in Sub-Saharan Africa, what is of urgent and more importance is good personalities. Where there are good personalities (as officers of the state) who have the interests of the masses at heart, they will do their utmost best to rejig existing (failing, fallen and weak) institutions for the good of all. Because governance is a call to service and not for personal aggrandizement, good personalities will always work around structures and institutions (to make them better and functional) to provide service to the people even against their personal comfort and interests. I make this claim because I am aware and I do subscribe that in African axiological system, duties are ranked primary to rights (Menkiti, 1984; Molefe, 2017). Afro-communitarianism recognizes the primacy of our duties to the collective over our individual right claims and comfort even though some African scholars have insisted on the contrary (Wiredu, 1996; Deng, 2004; Metz, 2011; Oyowe, 2014).

F) Conclusion

I have identified and exposed in this paper an ethic that is inherent in African communal moral intuition and framework for organizing a good human community that ensures and assures the delivery of good governance. Although Sub-Saharan Africa is hardest hit in terms of leadership failure occasioned by corruption and unbridled selfishness amongst politicians and officers of the state, I strongly suggest and advocate the giving of power to politicians who are identified as having the virtues of identity and solidarity as a life style and the "schooling" of those who aspire to hold public offices and/or to manage or oversea state resources in the values and virtues of identity and solidarity as espoused in this paper. The ethic of identity and solidarity, without prejudice to other proposals for good governance, is more fundamental to the quest of good governance in Africa and indeed anywhere else.

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