

Politically Exposed Persons and the Deficit of Governance in Nigeria and Zimbabwe: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

This work is a comparative historical analysis of the role of politically exposed persons in the deficit of governance in Nigeria and Zimbabwe. The 2020 Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation has ranked Nigeria 34 out of 54 countries and Zimbabwe 33. The ranking was based on security & rule of law, participation, and rights & inclusion foundations for economic opportunity and human development. Scholars generally agree that both countries have regressed in the above measurement index, although Zimbabwe improved in comparison to its last outing. Existing studies lay the blame on colonialism, the character of the state in post-colonial society, ethnicism, corruption, and incompetent leadership. These scenarios are underexplored in the literature vis-à-vis the elite theory of politics. The study adopts a methodology involving a re-description of history based on documentary research and establishes with empirical evidence the role of the elite in the deficit of governance in Nigeria and Zimbabwe within the time studied. The implication is that until there is an elite consensus to enthrone a regime of good governance in Nigeria and Zimbabwe, good governance may continue to elude the two countries in the foreseeable future.

Keywords: *Politically Exposed Persons, Deficit, Governance, Comparative Analysis, Nigeria, Zimbabwe*

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Background to the Study

Nigeria and Zimbabwe are countries of paradox. By the year 2000, Nigeria was the highest economic ranking on the African continent, with a nominal GDP of \$443 billion, followed by Egypt: \$350 billion, and South Africa \$283 billion. Yet, the per capita income of the population was the lowest in the continent, ranking 17th out of the 20 countries surveyed (Petrus et al, 2021:2). In 2018, the World Poverty Clock (2018) tagged Nigeria as the poverty capital of the world, with 87 million individuals located in the extreme poverty bracket. By 2024, Nigeria had the 4th highest economic ranking in Africa, with a nominal GDP of \$188,272 million. Yet, 133 million individuals are multidimensional poor (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Similarly, Zimbabwe's purchasing power parity was estimated at \$ 58.583 billion in 2024, yet according to the UNDP Multidimensional Poverty Index (2024), 482 million individuals in Zimbabwe are condemned to extreme poverty. The notion of politically exposed persons (PEP) has long been a defining feature of governance in both Nigeria and Zimbabwe, shaping the trajectory of these nations since their independence. According to Greenberg et al (2010:6), politically exposed persons refer to:

Individuals who have been entrusted with prominent public functions in a foreign country, for example, Heads of State or of government, senior politicians, senior government officials, judicial or military officials, senior executives of state-owned corporations, and important political party officials. Business relationships with family members or close associates of PEPs involve reputational risks similar to those with PEPs themselves (Greenberg et al, 2010:6).

In both countries, the concentration of power and resources in the hands of a small PEP has somewhat contributed to significant governance deficits, including corruption, authoritarianism, and exclusionary decision-making processes. This phenomenon has not only hindered economic development but also perpetuated social inequalities and undermined democratic institutions. A more glaring picture of the deficit of governance in both countries is reflected in the consistent low ranking of Nigeria and Zimbabwe in Mo Ibrahim governance rankings over four-year periods (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024). The ranking highlights a stable but stagnant performance in all matrices of good governance. This is despite having a stable and promising foundation during their political independence from Great Britain, with great optimism for a democratic consolidation.

Governance has been variously conceptualized as the act of governing and the management processes by the government, business organizations, and non-profit organizations, which engage in cohesive policies, guidance processes, and decision-making rights for a given area of responsibility (Bannister & Connolly, 2012; Fukuyama, 2013; Kjaer, 2023). An aggregate of the conceptualization of governance by the international donor agencies like the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), yield a holistic picture of the concept. According to USAID (2002) cited in (Suchita,2004:1), "governance is a complex system of interactions among structures, traditions, functions, responsibilities and processes characterised by three key values of

accountability, transparency and participation". It is equally striving for rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, participation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision in the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority (UNDP, 2002:2). In fact, a truly comprehensive conceptualization of good governance should embrace its governmental and economic dimensions.

The idea of good governance can only be measured within the context of a democratic system of government (Offiah, 2024). However, contrary to popular participation, democracy in the African context means the ability of a few people to effectively take control of the powers and authorities of governance, with or without the choice of those they represent (Obi, 2008). In fact, the practice of democracy in Africa has been shaped by the antagonistic interests of the politically exposed persons (PEP) and the masses, and in most cases, the PEP has maintained a sustained power in dictating the modus operandi of governance in Africa (Pomeranz & Stedman, 2020; Ortega-Rodríguez, 2024). Nigeria began with democratic credentials in 1960, but was interrupted by a military coup from 1966 to 1979 (Ayoola et al., 2024; Sowale, 2024). The democratic experiment was brief, as another military incursion on Nigerian politics was experienced until the third wave of the 1990s that catapulted democratisation in Nigeria with external assistance in 1999, which has been sustained till today, with the seeming impoverishment of the populace.

The root of politically exposed persons' engagement in politics in Nigeria and Zimbabwe can be traced back to their colonial past, where colonial powers empowered local elites to govern on their behalf. At the independence in Nigeria and Zimbabwe, it was their tiny elites to whom the British handed over power in 1960 and Zimbabwe in 1980 (Matamanda, 2021, Chikerema & Nzewi, 2021, Benyera, 2024, Ndlovu, 2024, Handley, 2024, Aboutera, 2025). These were men who were proud of their British connection, which they regarded as a pearl of great price. In Nigeria, the first set of those politicians who participated in the anti-colonial politics like Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikeiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Tafawa Balewa and a host of others who became relevant in the post-colonial contestations were those who had the privilege and the opportunity of securing western education which was seen as the minimal requirements of participating and making a meaningful contribution in the politics of that time (Coleman, 1986). Others were petty bourgeoisie who sprang up from trading, importation, and exportation of different kinds of goods produced overseas (Igwe, 2007). In this regard, Korieh (2010) observed that during the time that the colonial government in Nigeria made innovations and accelerated the development of agriculture in southeastern Nigeria; by establishing the Eastern Nigeria Development Corporation (ENDC) and Eastern Regional Development Board (ERDB) in 1954 as well as the construction of New School of Agriculture at Umuahia in 1955, the elite were at the centre of the transactions. These categories of individuals were the early ones who inherited the mantle of leadership, and they have reproduced themselves in Nigerian politics both at the centre and at the state level. The same elite captured the levers of power in Zimbabwe during their handover in 1980. Robert Mugabe and the ZANU patriotic front that captured power at independence were still the dispensers of the spoils of political offices till Mugabe was recently shoved aside in a palace coup. It is these crops of individuals that have allegedly been linked with misappropriating the

funds meant for the development of their various constituencies (Alemazung, 2010; Wa Muiu, 2010; Nkomo, 2011; Jallow, 2014).

With specific reference to the practice of democracy in South Africa, Zimbabwe's experiment with democratisation in modern times has a dialectical relation with the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in November 1965 by Ian Smith and his Rhodesian Front Government, to pre-empt a possible move by the British who had been relinquishing control in neighbouring colonies in favour of the indigenous blacks. This precipitated a bitter war between the Rhodesia Front Government and the nationalist forces (freedom fighters) spearheaded by the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) (Jacob, 2004). After an externally supervised conciliation, there was a general election in 1980, and Mugabe led ZANU-PF to victory, becoming Prime Minister (Moretti, 2017). In the formative years of Mugabe's administration, he expanded healthcare and education and championed conservative economic policies (Smiley, 1979; Moretti, 2017). Nevertheless, Mugabe tampered with the extant constitutional regulations and engaged in a self-succession bid that kept him in the seat of power until shoved aside by the military establishment that was a partner in the crime of disfranchising the Zimbabwe population. Today, Zimbabwe is a monument of gross deficit of governance, harassment of the Opposition political parties, poverty, corruption, and disunity among the population (Matambo et al, 2022).

Existing literature links these malaises with incompetent leaders (Ochulor, 2011; Kebonang & Kebonang, 2013; Arogbofa, 2022). Others blame the genetic makeup of African leaders (Bush & Molo, 2009; Knaus, 2014; Asafa, 2015). Nevertheless, these extant analyses have not demonstrated in a satisfactory manner the link between the past and the present, thereby presenting the deficit of governance in the two African countries as an ahistorical phenomenon. In contradistinction to the prevailing analyses, this study would implicate the role of the politically exposed persons in the deficiency of governance in Nigeria, taking into consideration that, beginning from the precolonial periods to the present periods, PEPs have occupied the strategic positions in dictating the future of African politics. At the centre of these deficits of governance in both Nigeria and Zimbabwe is the role of elites in democratic experiments. This paper attempts to situate the role of the PEPs in the deficit of governance in Africa with specific reference to Nigeria and Zimbabwe. To accomplish this, the work is divided into seven sections. Following this introduction is the literature review and the theoretical framework. This will be followed by the notes on methodology, presentation of empirical findings, discussion of results, and concluding remarks.

Literature Review

Scholars have advanced different rationales that account for the deficit of governance in Africa, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. These analyses are divided into two broad spectrums. One views the problem as externally induced, while the other views the problem as an internally driven exercise. The former looks at the role of Africa in the economic and political base within the international system and blames the institutional structures of the former colonial masters as being responsible for the socio-economic crisis of Africans. This perspective is best represented by Langan's argument that neo-colonialism is responsible for

African underdevelopment. According to him, the African continent is still under the shackles of neo-colonialism because in most cases, the major political economy and socio-cultural ideas, beliefs, norms, values, practices, structures and institutions introduced by the respective colonial imperialist powers were not dismantled after their independence. He therefore suggested that all the inherited political and socio-cultural structures from the colonial masters should be dismantled if Africans are to make a headway for development (Langan, 2018). Lambo (2021) presents a similar account. He contended that political independence offered to African countries like Nigeria and Zimbabwe was a product of individual efforts by the Africans. However, after the independence, the colonial masters came back in disguise through their friends and re-established themselves in the local governance of Africans, dictating their local politics, and as a result, Africans could not come out from the curse of poverty, famine, hunger, and corruption. Given the deteriorating economic conditions of Africans, they recommended doing away with neocolonialism by appealing to the humanity of the expatriates so that they can abandon their new imperialist adventures. Others, such as Cammack (2007, Kihika (2009, Makuwira (2017, Kabonga, et al (2021) have all implicated the development policy prescriptions of the donor agencies as undermining the provision of good governance to Africans. According to them, the attainment of political independence by African states was followed by the adoption of development policies built on state-led growth. It was believed that state-led capitalism would generate and transfer wealth to the masses and resolve the problem of poverty. This approach to development failed and left African states at the mercy of policy prescriptions from development partners, with harmful effects to good governance.

Related to the foregoing analysis is the issue of the post-colonial character of Nigerian state analysis. It is an offshoot of the Marxian method of analysis. However, scholars of third-world countries like Alavi (1972), Ake (1976), Ake (1985), and Ekekwe (1986), amongst others, have extrapolated and expanded the theory. Their assumptions have illuminated the basic characteristics of the state in post-colonial societies and have equally provided enlightenment regarding the deficit of governance in Nigeria and Zimbabwe. The basic assumptions of the theory are that post-colonial societies are a creation of colonialism and, as such, have followed the developmental patterns dictated by the interests of the imperial masters and their local partners rather than the majority of the indigenous population. As a result of that, it has limited autonomy, low economic capacity, and is unproductive, inefficient, thrives in corruption and embezzlement of state funds, has low legitimacy, and uses the state institution as a means of production. These undermine the state's capacity to fulfil its obligations and its capacity for the provision of good governance (Asogwa et al 2021). Analysis that implicates the character of the state in post-colonial society as the fundamental rationale for its inability to provide the common good argues that the features of politics in Africa today existed in the womb of colonialism. According to this view, colonialism bequeathed on Africans a premium attachment to power and a resort to authoritarianism as a bargaining power. Given that virtually all the Africans lacked the economic bases during independence, those who inherited the political offices used them to build their economic bases (Ibeanu, 2000). And in doing so, the state institutions became stripped of their autonomy and assumed the garb of a means of production (Ake 1985, Ekekwe, 1986). Instead

of fulfilling its constitutional role as a dispenser of good governance which the state inherited in the social contract bargains, the state became the instrument of the few people.

Secondly, other internal factors as pointed by authors, militating against the provision of good governance by the Nigerian and Zimbabwean state are the issue of ethnicity, leadership challenges, and corruption. Achimugu et al (2013) contend that the lumping of different ethnic groups together in Africa has made an integrating effort very difficult. With a specific reference to Nigeria, they argued that since party politics is an intrinsic mode of political recruitment in liberal democracy, political party formations in Nigeria have consistently had the imprints of ethnic colorations from independence to the fourth republic for wealth acquisition for a particular section of the society. According to them, an environment that thrives in ethnic politics in a pluralistic society is not capable of generating and sustaining democracy but breeds a radical ethnic organization, class struggle, and a legitimacy crisis because once the policy outcome of the government does not favour them, they are bound to cause problems. Egbefo (2015) also argued that ethnic politics portends danger for a healthy democratic practice because it tends to dust up the seeds of ethnicity, which breeds disintegration and antagonistic relations amongst the different ethnic groups. And instead of making provisions for the public goods that cut across every segment of society, it concentrates the value allocation in the hands of a fraction of the population in a prebendal manner, and democracy, which serves as a vehicle of conveying good governance, is the immediate attack (Joseph, 1983, 2014). Another factor enumerated by analysts as contributing to the inability of the politicians to provide good governance is leadership and corruption. Olayiwola (2013) observed that there is an interface between leadership failure, corruption, and the inability of politicians to provide good governance. He submitted that corruption reduces public spending on education, misplaces the priority of the country's needs, and impoverishes the masses, thereby contributing to the country's lower ranking in the development index.

Critique of the Existing Analysis

We have examined the literature on the impact of neocolonialism, post-colonial state analyses, leadership, and corruption on the provision of good governance in Nigeria and Zimbabwe. While the impact of neocolonialism on the politics of developing countries cannot be overemphasized because the structures of the imperial masters were not dismantled when they handed over the political leadership of their various colonies, it appears insufficient in pinpointing the specific group of people who are responsible for the deficit of governance in Africa. Its utilitarian analyses also fail to hold water when situated in a comparative template, given that other colonised countries like the United States of America are providing good governance for their teeming population. The leadership corruption viewpoint, undermining democratic practices as epitomised by the above scholarly contributions, illuminates us about the siphoning of public funds into private pockets without any consequences. However, it fails to address the fundamental issue of the identity of the groups that are involved in pillaging the public resources for private gains, hence, the gap. We propose that the deepest fundamental rationale contributing to the inability of Nigeria and Zimbabwe to experience good governance is the role of the politically exposed persons in the politics of the developing

countries. While the politically exposed persons cannot be wished out in politics, African politically exposed persons lack the zeal, patriotism and the overriding nationalist agenda to transform the mantle of leadership inherited from the colonial masters as would be pointed out in the preceding pages.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the theoretical plank of elite theory of politics. The essence of elite theory is that every society is divided into two, namely, the superior minority and the inferior majority, and the superior minority makes the decisions while the inferior majority obeys. The superior minority usually possesses higher education, greater wealth, easy access to culture, science, and technology, and embodies the good qualities of life. They form the elite that invariably takes control of the political, economic, and socio-cultural life of the society. This elite is counterpoised by the masses, the downtrodden, uneducated, powerless, and culturally unsophisticated majority segment of the population, who became the subject of the power, influence, and control of the elite (Nnoli, 2003). The elite theory was propounded to deflate the revolutionary class theory of Karl Marx. It was Vilfredo Pareto in his *Magnum Opus, The Mind and Society*, that systematically provided the foundational concepts of the elite. This was followed by Gaetano Mosca in his work, *The Ruling Class*, published in 1939. Their elucidation of the concept formed an essential political doctrine which was critical to the understanding of the functions of modern democracy (Mbah, 2014:119). Another scholar who contributed to the understanding of elite theory is Robert Michels, who formulated the iron law of oligarchy to explain the practical unattainability of a real democracy as practiced by the Athenians. According to Michels in his work, *The Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, “who says organisation says oligarchy” because (1) there will always be necessity in human life to seek common objectives, (2) organisations are indispensable instruments for their achievements, (3) such organisations would of necessity produce their own bureaucracies ie, the organisational mechanisms for goals attainment to systematically coordinate the work of the various individuals or arms of the organisation, (4) one ineluctable attribute of a bureaucracy is hierarchy, a pyramid with so many on the ground and so few at the top, (5) it is actually these few at the top that make decisions, policies and control and guide the organization, (6) hence, organisational oligarchy or the concentration of power in a few hands, an inbuilt organisational inequality is the very opposite of democracy (Obasigwe, 2007:303).

The elite theory does not just imply that in every society the minority makes decisions and the majority obeys, but that the dominant minority cannot be controlled by the majority in whatever democratic mechanisms are used (Obianyo, 2008). Michels in (Parry, 1977:3) put it thus: “Historical evolution mocks all the prophylactic measures that have been adopted for the prevention of oligarchy. If laws are passed to control the domination of the leaders, it is the laws which gradually weaken, and not the leaders”. Max Weber in (Axtmann, 2001) therefore explains that once elected into political offices, the leaders hardly rule as the executors of the will of the electorate but rule exclusively by virtue of their own personal responsibility and the virtue of personal authority that derives formally from the consensus of the ruled. Generally, elite in a more comprehensive sense denotes those positions in society which are the summits

of key structures, ie, the higher positions in government, economy, politics, religion, and others. It also refers to those people who have distinct qualities by which they are differentiated from the general mass of people. The elite owes its peculiar position of privileges to the recognition and esteem accorded to it by the people in society. Consequently, democratic systems all over the world in modern times rely on the wisdom, loyalty, and skill of their political leaders, not on the population at large, for piloting the affairs of humanity. The political system is divided into two groups. The first is the elite who are political entrepreneurs, possessing ideological commitments and manipulative skills. The second group is the masses and the citizens at large. The masses are regarded as the apolitical clay of the system, passive followers who have little or no knowledge of political affairs. As such, they are less interested in politics, and so, in every sphere of social life, there is an elite. (Mbah,2014:120). Ejiofor (2007) provides a checklist of the indices of elite as comprising flamboyance, social recognition, affluence, industry, wealth, prodigal conviviality, leadership, learning, and observed that an obvious measurement of elite politics is in its preference for a small group dominating the whole society and making important decisions. It is no wonder that there is an elite among political office holders, academics, armed robbers, doctors, footballers, etc.

Some scholars have argued that the utilitarian efficacy of elite analysis is unsustainable because of some serious methodological difficulties. These difficulties are its deficiency in possessing objective criteria for determining its membership, its subjectivity, which cuts across individuals and time, and its non-dynamic approach in assessing the relationship between the masses and the elite. They equally argued that elite theory fails to account for the intervention of the masses in various revolutionary epochs in society, like China, Vietnam, Cuba, and Russia. It does not equally indicate at what stage the masses migrate to the elite position (Nnoli, 2003:45). Despite these illuminating apposite stands, it is difficult to pinpoint the most recurring group of individuals controlling African politics other than the elite, and therefore, elite analysis subsists for this study.

Historising the role of the Elite in the Governance Deficit in Nigeria

The preponderance of elites in Nigerian politics dates back to both colonial and post-colonial periods. According to Coleman (1986), the leaders and most of the active supporters of the Nigerian nationalist movement in the pre-independence era came from the ranks of those who had been most strongly affected by Western influences and, in particular, from the Western-educated English-speaking minority. By the early 1950s, when nationalism was well advanced, this group at most constituted not more than 6 percent of the total population of Nigeria. In fact, from the 1920s to the 1950's about 1,143,459 had already graduated from various schools or were about to graduate and were waiting to be deployed into the political services. These nationalist elements within the educated category came from a much smaller subgroup consisting mainly of barristers, teachers, clerks, and skilled labourers and artisans. The size, occupational components, and tribal origins are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Tribal Representation in Selected Occupations in The Township of Southern Nigeria (Eastern and Western Region), 1921

Tribe	Percent of the total educated	Professional	Teachers	Artisans	Total
Yoruba	40.3	47	4,882	5,769	10,698
Native					
Foreigners	7.3	26	1,732	978	2,738
Ibibio	25.0	.	509	179	688
Igbo	11.0	.	1,132	642	1,774
Edo	3.0	.	226	172	393
Others	13.4	.	406	347	753

Source, Coleman (1986)

The above table clearly establishes the domination of public services by the elites. It also shows the substantial differences in tribal representation of these professional groups. As can be vividly observed, the Yoruba had a sustained lead on the number of professionals scoring an overall 10,698, while the Igbos followed with a total number of 1,774 in the public service. James Colman also observed that it was this glaring disparity that spurred the Igbos and the Ibibio to overcome their early handicap and in the post war period, the same urge animated the Hausa-Fulani in the North.

It is also important to appreciate that the Europeans resented the educated elite but had no choice other than to gradually involve them in the governance of the day. In the 1922 and 1946 Legislative Councils, the educated elite were only given four quotas. Three were elected from Lagos and one from Calabar by an electorate composed of the wealthier members of the community. In addition, the governor appointed seven Africans to the Councils during the period 1923-1946 and ten during the period 1946-1960 to represent the interior of the Southern Provinces. However, there was no African representation of the Northern region until 1946 (Coleman, 1986: 141-151). It was still the educated elites that coordinated the early resistance and protest movements against the colonial authorities and attended different constitutional conferences that ushered in the independent government in 1960 and beyond. There are also records that from 1999 that Nigeria returned to democratic dispensation, the elite have been in the forefront of the management of the public goods and have been responsible for the unenviable diadem of Nigeria as the poverty capital of the world. It is therefore not surprising that anti-corruption institutions in Nigeria have continued to beam their torchlight on various individuals who have occupied various offices at different periods in Nigeria. See tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Category of crimes and type of office holders

Crime type category	Embezzlement/ misappropriation	Corruption	Money laundering	Fraud (fuel subsidy)	Sum
Governors	12	5	6	1	24
Ministers	0	1	3	4	8
Senators	1	0	1	1	3
Cent. Admin	1	1	2	0	4
Directors	4	0	1	2	7
Military	1	0	0	2	3
Law Enforcement	2	1	0	0	3
Oil position	0	0	0	4	4
Political party	1	0	0	0	1
Elect.com	0	1	0	0	1
Accountant	0	0	0	1	1
Media	0	0	0	1	1
Totals	22	9	13	16	60

Source: Van Duyen & Harvey (2022:8)

Table 2 demonstrates the specific identities of the individuals who have diverted the public resources to their private purses. They are the former governors, ministers, Senators, Directors, those who have held administrative offices, highest ranking in the military hierarchy, high ranking law enforcement officers, oil magnets, leadership of political parties that have held state powers, Accountants, and of course, the news media as their collaborators. The table also indicates that these public funds were diverted to foreign countries, thereby contributing to building and improving the domestic economy of those countries. The data also shows that a quarter of the indicted governors were charged with money laundering, thereby operating a proxy. This development indicates that corruption in Nigeria has a social characterisation.

Table 3: Types of crime and types of office holders

N. cases	N. suspects	Total #	Range lowest	Range Highest	Media	Total foreign currency in \$
16	1	510,418,822,786	0	300,000,000,000	5,750,000,000	\$29.8m
11	2	21,276,412,315	0	7,600,000,000	1,600,000,000	\$1.3m
13	3	61,435,300,000	0	21,000,000,000	1,575,000,000	\$12.0m
9	4	51,427,000,000	0	29,000,000,000	925,000,000	\$21.0m
2	5	4,700,000,000	0	4,700,000,000	2,350,000,000	\$115.0m
1	6	2,600,000,000	2,600,000,000	2,600,000,000	2,600,000,000	0
1	9	6,500,000,000	6,500,000,000	6,500,000,000	6,500,000,000	0
1	10	5,200,000,000	5,200,000,000	5,200,000,000	5,200,000,000	0
2	11	5,479,000,000	479,000,000	5,000,000,000	2,739,500,000	0
1	12	1,900,000,000	1,900,000,000	1,900,000,000	1,900,000,000	0
1	25	100,000,000,000	100,000,000,000	100,000,000,000	100,000,000,000	0

Source: Petrus et al (2022:10)

In table 3, it shows that the largest financial wreckage was attached to cases involving the minutest number of politically exposed persons to the detriment of the generality of the population. The most indicted set of the politically exposed is the governors. The amount of money they were accused of embezzling amounted from ₦211.3 million in 2011 against the former governor of Ogun state. The allegation of the governor of Boronu state ranged around ₦300 billion naira. According to Petrus et al (2021:10), “the EFCC also wanted to know how he raised \$72 million to buy G650 Gulfstream aircraft after leaving office in 2011.

According to Transparency IT (2021), there is a lack of transparency in the data released by EFCC because the commission has stopped publishing on its websites a detailed yearly record of petitions, investigations, and convictions it has secured and the persons convicted of money laundering, corruption, cybercrime, and other related crimes. Despite these challenges, available data indicate that EFCC received 15,949 petitions, rejected 1,401, investigated 10,002, and secured a total of 2,862 convictions against the members of the elite who tampered with the public fund from 2015-2020. Among those convicted were ex-governors, top military officers, captains of industries, and other politically exposed persons. There is no single common man who appeared in the convictions.

Furthermore, acting on the whistle-blowing policy of the federal government, the EFCC has recovered humongous cash of \$43million, \$27,000, and ₦23million in Osborne Towers, Ikoyi, Lagos, all of which have now been forfeited to the federal government. The investigation of arms procurement fraud in the military was perpetrated by elite and also led to the recoveries, including \$1million cash belong to the late retired Air Chief Marshal Alex Badeh, former chief of Défense Staff (CDS). Air Marshal Adesola Amosun, also lost his choice properties and funds to federal government. These include: ₦2.24billion, a house located on Adeyemo Alakija street, Ikeja GRA, a set of houses in the Badagry area of Lagos and an ultra-modern hospital, St Solomon Health Care Limited, located on Adeniyi Jones Avenue in Ikeja, also in Lagos. These have since been forfeited to the federal government. In the final forfeiture of ₦1.4billion Paris Club Refund in Lagos, a firm linked to the immediate Senate President, Bkola Saraki, was implicated and the court ordered for its forfeiture to the federal government. Saraki also forfeited ₦220million, allegedly obtained from the Nigerian Governors forum (NGF) through false consultancy claims and traced to Wasp Networks Limited and Thebe Wellness Services. Properties recovered from the former minister of Petroleum Resources, Mrs Diezani Alison-Madueke, from 2015 to date are: 76 Housing units and two parcels of land in Abuja, Lajos and Port Harcourt valued at ₦.82billion and \$41.7million, two houses in Aso Drive and Asokoro, Abuja valued at ₦9995million and one mansion and twine duplex in Yenogua, Bayelsa valued at ₦602.5million. Jewelry valued at \$40million were also recovered from the former petroleum minister (van Duyne & Harvey, 2022).

It is therefore not surprising that the security situation in Nigeria is a terrible state because the chief security officers have redeployed these public funds into private pockets. The state of Nigerian security is horrible. The 1999 constitution of Nigeria boldly stated that the security

and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the government, and the participation of the people in their government shall be ensured in accordance with the provisions of the constitution (1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). But in contradistinction to this noble goal, the forest is not safe, the homelands are not safe, the churches are not safe, the markets are not safe, schools are not safe, and worst of all, the security architectures, which should be the last hope, are under attack. Every day, there is a chilling story of gruesome killings and maiming of innocent Nigerians, and the government has no answer to the problem. In fact, the aggregate activities of Boko Haram, Fulani-Herdsmen, IPOB, Eastern Security Network (ESN), Amatokun, Niger-Delta militants, and other ethnic militias have returned Nigeria to a state of nature where life is short, brutish, and nasty, poor. The Boko Haram terrorist organization has been acknowledged as the deadliest terrorist organisation in the world. It has killed thousands and displaced millions (Statista, 2021).

A report by the United States Government published on Premium Times of March 26, 2018 described Nigeria as a country where corruption, official impunity, and gross human rights violations occur at will. The report observed that terrorist group, Boko Haram, and the Nigerian Government are the worst perpetrators of human rights abuses in Nigeria. The most serious human rights abuses during the year were those committed by Boko Haram, which conducted killings, bombings, abduction and rape of women, and other attacks throughout the country, resulting in numerous deaths, injuries, and widespread destruction of property; those committed by security services, which perpetrated extrajudicial killings, torture, rape, beatings, arbitrary detention, mistreatment of detainees, and destruction of property; and widespread societal violence, including ethnic, regional, and religious violence (Premium Times of March 26, 2018).

The state of economic opportunity and development in Nigeria is also very poor. The major indicator of economic opportunity should be the number of individuals lifted from poverty within a particular year. Globally, poverty has been recognised as a major blemish in developing economies ever since economists began to take an interest in the third world. On the whole, the Nigerian economy depends so much on the exportation of oil that nearly all its budgetary revenues come from oil earnings sold in the international market. In 1973, most economic indicators such as real per capita income, real wages, and private consumption were positively impacted by the first oil shock, which caused a dramatic increase and sharp rise in them. In spite of the strong growth rate in Africa's second largest economy, poverty has kept rising in Nigeria to the extent that in 2020, the World Poverty Clock ranked Nigeria as the poverty capital of the world. Nigeria exceeded India with the largest rate of people living in extreme poverty. In Nigeria, about 86.9 million people live in severe poverty, which is about 50% of its entire population. This is as a result of elite corruption and mismanagement of the oil business (World Poverty Clock, 2020 cited in Elomien et al, 2022). The proportion of Nigerians who were absolutely poor rose from 54.7% in 2016 to 69.9% in 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics 2020).

Incidents of the Elite's Role in the Governance Deficit in Zimbabwe

In the Mo Ibrahim Index of Good Governance, Zimbabwe has had a mixture of performance, sometimes outperforming the self-acclaimed giant of Africa, Nigeria. Despite outperforming Nigeria, Zimbabwe is facing the challenges of electoral illegitimacy, lawlessness, hunger, and the consolidation of democracy. The second Republic under Emmerson Mnangagwa appears to be increasingly focusing its energy towards consolidating power through any means necessary as opposed to constructing effective representative institutions that make economic development and improved standards of living in the country possible. Zimbabweans continue to suffer the effects of an economy that was subjected to 37 years of plunder by the governing elite under the late Robert Mugabe's tutelage (Rwodzi, 2017). According to the 2015 Index of Economic Freedom compiled by the Heritage Foundation, GDP per capita is only \$788 in Zimbabwe, making it one of the poorest countries in the world. Furthermore, the Heritage Foundation has given Zimbabwe a poor score of only 37.6 out of 100, ranking it dead last out of the 46 Sub-Saharan African nations studied and only the 175th economically-free nation of the 178 studied, ranked above only Venezuela, Cuba, and North Korea (Murombo, 2016). However, this was not always the case. When Zimbabwe first declared independence in 1965, its economy was diverse, it had a well-built infrastructure, and it had an enviable financial sector (Kokera & Ndoma, 2016). In the 1970s, the country had mining, agriculture, manufacturing, local businesses selling supplementary goods, and plenty of food (Murombo, 2016).

When the British colonialists left Zimbabwe (which was then called Southern Rhodesia), they left 70% of the fertile land in the hands of a white minority. Mugabe became determined to change this, as he perceived it to be a grave injustice. Therefore, in 2000, he implemented a Marxist land reform program. When a constitutional provision protecting white landowners expired, the parliament authorized the seizure of land from white farmers, burdening Britain to repay them (Murombo, 2016). Mugabe promptly enforced this policy through violent means, hiring thuggish men to expropriate the land by chasing the white farmers away. The land was then redistributed to the elite in Mugabe's inner circle of fellow party members of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front, abbreviated ZANU-PF (Baker, 2014: 251). Jason (2017) also argued that the ruling Zanu-PF party and allies in the military launched their takeover to purge an ambitious faction that threatened their position, not because they wanted to see structural reform that would shut down their own lucrative rackets and rent-seeking.

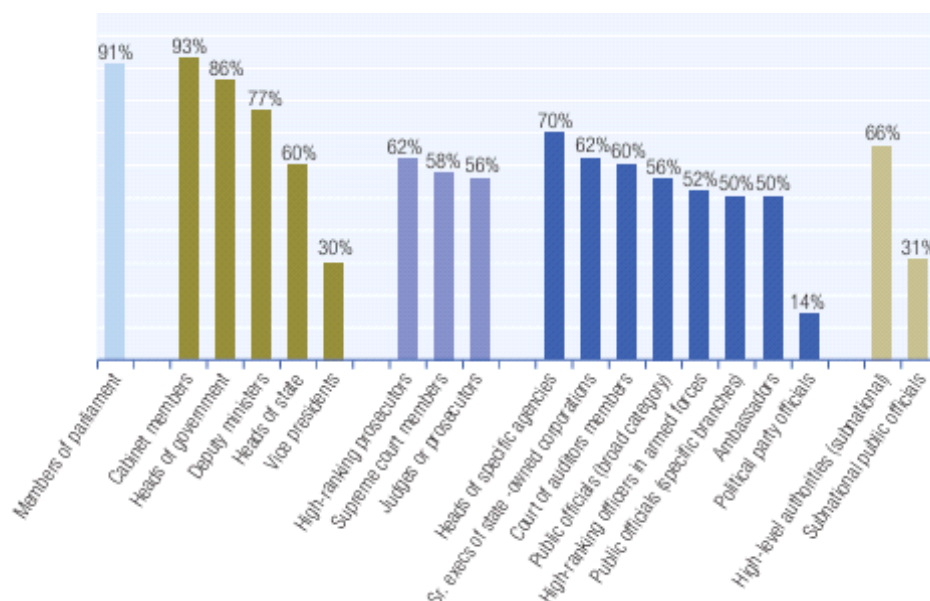
This extractive institution had devastating effects on the population and economy. Many white farmers fled the country, taking their agricultural expertise with them (Murombo, 2016). With no plan in place to keep the planting and harvesting cycles turning, approximately 400,000 farm workers were left unemployed, but the government failed to manage the farms, leading to shortages of food such as corn and export crops such as tobacco (Murombo, 2016). Consequently, food prices soared, and shortages have remained common even recently. In 2014, for example, as many as 2.2 million Zimbabweans needed food assistance. With a formerly booming agricultural sector in ruins, investor confidence in

Zimbabwe diminished (“Zimbabwe”). As bad as his land reform program has proven to be, Mugabe did not stop there with property rights violations. In May 2005, Mugabe launched Operation Murambatsvina, a native word which means “drive out rubbish.” It is more commonly known as Operation Restore Order. The stated purpose of the program was to diminish the number of illegal settlements, such as squatter housing, as well as criminal enterprises. The essential outcome, however, was the razing of makedo dwellings, the targeting of “illegal” marketplaces in the streets, the destruction of businesses, and the eviction of forest dwellers (Ncube & Murray, 2025). According to one U.N. estimate, approximately 700,000 people suddenly found themselves homeless, and another 2.4 million people were adversely affected.

Therefore, the lack of respect for property rights from Mugabe and his ruling party has led to utter chaos and much suffering for the Zimbabwean people. Meanwhile, Mugabe and his administrators have been enriching themselves through corruption. For example, in 1995, Mugabe turned a blind eye to the theft of money from the National Housing Fund by his senior officials, which they used to purchase ritzy real estate for themselves, and no one was prosecuted upon discovery (Baker, 2014:251-252). The money, which totalled approximately \$12 million and was supposed to help house the poor, was stolen by means of disguising the withdrawals as loans (“Zimbabwe: Corruption”). Corruption has continued to the present day. According to a recent report from their tax-collecting agency, the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (Zimra), approximately \$2 billion was lost to corruption in 2012, equalling nearly one-sixth of the country's GDP that year (Cain, 2015). It is also commonplace in Zimbabwean politics for civil servants to demand bribes in exchange for their services. Fittingly, in 2011, Transparency International gave Zimbabwe a Corruption Perceptions Index score of 2.1 out of 10, indicating a high level of corruption (“Zimbabwe”). Whether it is grand or petty, corruption in any form leads to economic uncertainty and insecurity.

Not only has corruption led to the funnelling of government funds away from providing public goods and services, but it has also directly prevented economic growth. As late as 1996, for example, Mugabe strengthened and maintained the monopoly that the Posts and Telecommunications Corporation had on the telephone business. The PTC only provided landline services with ten-year waiting lists for installations, so Mugabe effectively barred the introduction of cell phones into his country for a long time. At one point, he even banned cellular technology completely. Now, not only was it tyrannical to prevent creative destruction and modernization, but Mugabe's reason for doing so makes it an act of corruption: the PTC was state-owned and run by his fellow ZANU-PF party members. They essentially employed rent-seeking behaviours, and Mugabe readily supplied economic rents to them because they were his friends (Baker, 2014: 251). Corruption thus stifled advances in technology and, as a result, also stifled economic growth.

Table 4: Category of crimes and type of office holders



Source: Rossi, Ivan, et al. (2012:14)

In the above table 4, it shows that just like in Nigeria where a tiny minority of politically exposed persons have cornered the wealth, it is also obtainable in Zimbabwe. As demonstrated at the table, 91% of members of the parliament who are supposedly law makers participated in the embezzlement of the state resources. 77% of the Heads of government, 60% of Deputy ministers, and 30% of the Office of the Vice President, and all strata of governance, participated in looting the treasure of the state.

In addition to the foregoing development, Zimbabwe's ruling elite is using funds coming from diamond exports to finance its Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), accused of several human-rights abuses (Saunders, 2008; Bond & Sharife, 2012; Nzenzema, 2016; Taruvinga, 2016; Roth & Myers, 2017). According to the anticorruption campaign group Global Witness, the country's diamonds are channelled through Dubai, Belgium, and Mozambique by a complex network of cross-owned firms based in various places, including Hong Kong, the British Virgin Islands, South Africa, and Mauritius (Mantzaris & Saruchera, 2024). What those companies have in common, the London-based group said in the report, is business connections with either the Zimbabwe government or its military, which have been secretly profiting from the trade in a nation where three-fourths of the population lives in poverty (Witness, 2017, Ndhlovu & Santos, 2022).

The report also examines five major mining companies that have recently operated in the Marange diamond fields and may continue to hold a stake in its future: Kusena Diamonds, Anjin Investments, Jinan Mining, Diamond Mining Corporation (DMC), and Mbada Diamonds. It details steps taken to conceal their finances, shield their operations from public

scrutiny, and hide their ultimate beneficiaries and owners. The government's effort to amalgamate the industry into a single new Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC) is stuttering. The ZCDC's operations have also been beset by the same secrecy that has grown endemic to Zimbabwe's diamond industry, while some of its proposed shareholders appear drawn from the very same cast of characters that have charted Marange's history to date...Global Witness has uncovered new evidence that reveals how Zimbabwe's feared Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), the military, notorious smugglers, and well-heeled political elites all gained control or ownership of companies operating in Zimbabwe's diamond fields. Despite the role the security forces have played in subverting Zimbabwe's democracy and perpetrating serious human rights abuses, Zimbabwean diamonds are traded freely on international markets with the Kimberley Process' seal of approval. Rather than encouraging transparency and reforms, international demand has delivered a market for Zimbabwe's diamonds (Witness,2017:1-2).

Concluding Remarks

We began this study by highlighting the empirical indicators of the deficits of governance in both Nigeria and Zimbabwe. We observed that beginning from the precolonial era to the early post-colonial period, it was a tiny minority of the enlightened group of people in Africa that became part and parcel of governance, whether in Nigeria or Zimbabwe. We demonstrated that what determined the character of the individuals who joined the tiny minority at that early period was Western education. But as time went on, the modus of joining the minority became a matter of political reproduction as individuals connected with those who held political offices replicated themselves. We noted that while extant analyses of the trajectory of misgovernance are everywhere, there was an obvious lacuna in specifically identifying these individuals who are responsible for the deficit of governance in Africa. Taking advantage of the names of those individuals released from the anti-corruption organisations across the globe, we came to unveil the identity of these individuals as the politically exposed persons. It is these high-profile personalities who were entrusted with public funds that have embezzled the funds of Nigeria and Zimbabwe and are responsible for the state of deficit of governance in these two countries, which had an enviable foundation. Deploying the theoretical frame of elite theory, we argued that while a tiny minority will continue to dictate the trajectory of governance given their overall preparedness and qualifications, until the masses hold this superior minority responsible for the governance malaise in Africa, the deficit of governance will continue to be a sustainable feature of African politics.

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