

# THE PURSUIT OF PRIMORDIAL INTEREST AS AN EXPLANATORY FACTOR FOR THE PREVALENCE OF GOVERNANCE CRISIS IN LIBERIA'S DEMOCRACY

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The prevalence of governance crisis in Liberia is obvious. Inadequate structural facilities continue to impede quality of life while public office holders live in opulence. With abundant resources serving the interests of the individual in positions of power, the Liberian state continuously slides backward in sustainable development. This paper investigated effect of illicit satisfaction of politicians' and cronies' selfish interests over national interest occasioned by governance crisis. The paper contends that politicians and cronies in a bid to satisfy their primordial interests unduly revel, worship and perpetually make demands on leaders as soon as a leader ascends power. This in turn propels political office holders to abandon provision of public goods in a bid to satisfy the quests of their cronies. Since they rely on public treasury to satisfy these needs, political leaders therefore resort to looting to access sufficient fund. The paper argues that proclivity towards satisfying the quests of politicians' and cronies' interests at the expense of public goods aggravates governance crisis in Liberia. Thus, corrupt public office holders continue to enjoy the support and receive accolades from the people who are usually beneficiaries of these ill schemes. The paper further argues that, in spite of efforts of anti-corruption agencies and civil society organisations in the fight against impunity and bad governance in Liberia, the effective and rapid promotion of good governance demands a multi-faceted approach in its practice as it affects democracy in Liberia. To this end, the paper suggests additional ways of addressing the problem of primordial interests and governance crises in Liberia.

**Keywords:** Cronies, Governance crisis, National interest, Primordial interest, Trustworthiness, Integrity, Harmony, Accountability, Openness, Public Spiritedness

## INTRODUCTION

Political inquest and academic discourse in the study of governance, particularly in respect of governance crisis in Liberia is prompted by unfortunate cases of impunity, corruption, display of ethnic bias, non-adherence to democratic tenets by public office holders and unwarranted celebration and accolades of politicians by their cronies (Afolabi, 2011). Governance crisis has thus triggered studies designed to address this menace, considering the benefits of good governance to a nation. In Liberia, policies that can enhance good governance, promote national interest and consolidate the nation's democracy have been articulated and enforced in a bid to control perceived cases of excessive crave for primordial interests over civic interests by the cronies of public office holders, but it seems these policies are only good as their names suggests on the surface and not effective in resolving governance crisis (Aliyu, Afolabi and Egbetola, 2013).

In Liberia, since the inception of democracy in the history of the nation's state, political leaders have always been accused and blamed for bad governance and low sustainable development. Not unexpectedly, public office holders including politicians have been subjected to various accusations for causing bad or governance crisis in Liberia. The foregoing notwithstanding, not much intellectual resources have been deployed to investigate the roles of cronies of politicians (relations, friends, party loyalists, associates, lovers, in – laws, and Godfathers) plays in governance crisis in Liberia.

However, studies in this area have tended to focus on governance crisis and primordial interests with the blame being on leaders and political elites, while not much academic works have been focused on actions of the cronies of the politicians or those in positions of government in causing the governance crisis. The cronies constitutes friends (girls and boys), associates, loyalists and Godfathers of politicians or public office holders as well as ethnic group(s) to which

public office holders belong, who most times were the first persons to congratulate leaders or politicians who have just ascend positions of governance. These group of people (cronies), tend to be more culpable of the offence of crave for inordinate satisfaction of their selfish interests, which more often than not, propels them to make undue demands on politicians or public offices holders. The politicians, especially those in positions of governance in turn resorted to looting of public funds to satisfy their cronies' quest. The consequence of this is governance crisis as it adversely affects delivery of public goods to the people as well as accountability, rule of law and transparency in governance. The basic issue to which this paper addresses itself, is to, in an exploratory manner; investigate the extent to which the actions or inactions of cronies of politicians and the crave for primordial interests over national interests have aided governance crisis in Liberia. The paper is interested in investigating how the actions of the cronies of politicians have unduly influenced political offices holders in engendering bad governance or governance crisis in Liberia.

This paper comprises of four sections. Section one contains the introduction; in section two, a brief conceptual analysis of the terms "primordial" and "governance" as well as theoretical analysis is presented. The third section contains actions/roles of cronies of public office holders that engenders governance crisis. Discussion of the benefits of national interests over primordial sentiments is also highlighted. Section four contains the conclusion.

## **Primordial and Governance: Some Conceptual Perspectives**

### **Primordial Interest**

The term primordial interest has many meanings and connotes different things to different people. In general, these are qualities, principles and behaviours which selfish people hold in high esteem for intensive desire of themselves/interest or their ethnic group. To localise it, it is the process whereby society is configured for the interest of few individual elites, ethnic group, and friends including array of lovers and in-laws and not for the populace. Philosophically and individually, it occurs when an entity wallows in a shallow, deep memory and no leader is ready to sacrifice his life to better the country. Instead the person loots the country's resources for self-enrichment. Odeh (2003) sees parochial instinct as being prevalent among ethnic cleavages in Liberia. This is essentially a system of shared identity and social solidarity expressing itself through a circuit which concentrates and redistributes income; and exclusion is a result of the absence of social bond between the insiders and the outsiders (Dommen, 1997: 493). In the same vein, it is a situation whereby procedures governing the operation of state offices are used as fig-leaves behind which state resources are appropriated; and under the confiscatory system, government officials simply seize public assets without even attempting to camouflage their behaviour behind rules and procedures (Joseph, 1999: 49-50). Taking a critical look at this view, it can be inferred that this view shows three striking traits of governance in Liberia. First, there was a pervasive misappropriation of "state" resources for selfish motive. Second, such resources allocations were patterned along ethnic identities patron-client networks. Third, the distributive arena was largely regionalized, and clientelist relations were diffuse.

It is important to note that primordial interest is manifested in ethnic bias, self-enrichment, corruption, tribalism, abuse of public office, impunity among others. Ethnically, Nnoli (1978) states that ethnic groups are a social formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries, language as the crucial variable for ethnic identity. Ethnic groups consist of those who are by virtue of their common ancestry, language and culture; it connotes the interaction among the members of the diverse groups, ethnic loyalty, feelings of attachment to one's ethnic group. The basis of the ethnic prejudice found in a perceived plural society like Liberia is anchored on national disunity. These breed primordial sentiment which relegates universalism at the background and hampers national development at different points in time. The criterion for locating public resources / development / Institutions / industries in Liberia is on ethnic line than the suitability on the arena of genuine development, and this includes sharing of our scarce resources (Osaghe, 2001). In a more revealing approach, Osaghae (1994:44), notes that ethnicity is problematic phenomenon whose character is conflictual rather than consensual. Having enumerated the features of ethnicity on which scholars agreed the author stressed that ethnicity is a conscious behaviour based on ethnic identity or loyalty in a competitive situation involving more than one such identity, which aimed at furthering interests of the individual and/or group.

It can be inferred from Osaghae's view that primordial interest is manifested when people tend to project and pursue strictly their interests at the expense of national values in a competitive situations. This takes the form of a situation where public office holders pursue policies that can only be beneficial to him / her and his / her group leaving the entire populace to wallow in muddles. In Liberia, there are cases of officials (Ministers, Commissioners, Superintendents, District Commissioners and Chiefs who have used their position to attract incentives and social services meant for the state and entire local government area to their village and / or constituency. Maier (2000: 23) aptly corroborated this view where he contends that:

Rare is the head of state who acts on behalf of the entire nation. The people are not so much governed as ruled. It is as if they live in a criminally mismanaged corporation where the bosses are armed and have barricaded themselves inside the company safe. Like their previous governance ancestries before now, the successive leaders have continued to suck out billions of dollars annually and stashed them in Western banks (in the United States of America - mostly and Britain occasionally). This is one major problem which has plagued Liberia's development and its people since the

inception of its democracy. This continued to be propelled by poor governance, crowned by nepotism and favouritism as well as greed. It is rooted in myopia of some selfish people (politicians' cronies) who in an attempt to assuage their thirst for primordial interests on acquisition of power, lucrative positions, money, and contracts among other things, unduly influence, pressurise or push their leaders to steal or loot public funds. This in return leaves leaders with little or nothing to expend on service delivery, it makes them unaccountable, corruption and largely unlawful power dispensing, consequently leading to a situation of governance crisis. For Liberian leaders and their cronies, governance has always been about plundering of the country's resources and the accumulation of wealth at the country's expense.

Primordial interest, apart from manifesting in ethnic bias and personal interest, also manifests in secular celebration or undue apple-polishing of leaders in position of governance. It is no more news that some people known as the cronies of public office holders, who because of poverty and sense of customary slogan that "it is our time or term to rule, we will take our share of the national cake" have conspired with leaders in governance to loot public funds and satisfy their individual gains and inner sentiments over national values. It is also manifested when an old school friends' visits newly elected leaders or appointed officers to greet them and repeatedly make undue demands that promote their selfish interest, there are even cases where people have sang praises of corrupt leaders instead of rebuking them. There have been classic cases of former leaders who looted the government covets are reappointed to most senior and lucrative government income generating entities. The case of Robert Sirleaf, (the beloved son of the former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who looted and totally emptied the covets of the National Company of Liberia –NACOL), while the mother, President Sirleaf simply said she took responsibility for the action of her son and that was the end of the stolen case with both the mother and son seeing moving with impunity remains fresh on the minds of every Liberian. Also, the case of Mr. Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan the former Minister of Foreign Affairs who was implicated into the Japanese assistant funds scandal, while the investigation was pending, again, the President said she could put her neck on the chopping board for the character of Minister Ngafuan, a statement to insinuate, that Mr. Ngafuan was upright and corruption free. The corruption exempt, Minister Ngafuan retained his post without a least investigation of the entire scandal and moves on with flying colours up to the end of President Sirleaf's tenure. These are few of the classic cases of a patronage of corrupt system by former President Sirleaf and her cronies which has indemnified corruption in Liberia. Indeed, the level of governance crisis and backwardness of Liberia is not a doubt. Nations that have achieved greatness in the 21st century have one thing in common: the system works and people participate in governance. These nations are endowed with selfless individuals and leaders, who exhibited exceptional intelligence, courage and vision at every turn, to chart the best course, define the right path, and make the citizens believe in the outcomes of their works (Oladipo, 2013).

The foregoing has reasonably shown that primordial interests also manifest in the way people make illicit demands on those in governance. In Liberia, the problem of governance crisis is not caused by the leaders alone but by people who unduly celebrate them because of reciprocal incentives and personal gains they enjoy from those corrupt leaders.

Besides, the pursuance of primordial interest by cronies of politicians is also manifested in corrupt attitude of people. It becomes a corrupt action when people who are supposed to be rebuking and exposing leaders involved in corruption are the ones protecting and welcoming them with warm hands. Corruption in the views of (Nye, 1967; Dobel, 1978; Amuwo, 2005; Obayelu, 2007; Fjeldstad and Isaksen, 2008; Ogundiya, 2009), is the exploitation of public position, resources, and power for private gain. For instance, in the republic of Liberia, there are numerous cases of primordial sentiments manifested through corruption such as the award of contracts to friends and marital relationships at the expense of more qualified contractors. A good example supporting this assertion was the case of the 64 concessions agreements that were signed under the reign of former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, an audit report subsequently shows that 62 of those were said to be bogus. A case in point, is that of Senator Commany B. Wesseh, whose wife is a foster daughter to the former President Sirleaf was accused to have used his influence and power proximity to have stolen hundreds of thousands of dollars from one of the least developed Counties, River Gee from a company Gee-Gbeh River Assistant Development Associates (GRADA) he found and operated through his surrogates in the county and was awarded bogus contracts ranging from schools, clinics to Commissioner's residence constructions etc. all of which either never kick off or just broke grounds but the monies for the constructions were since withdrawn and misappropriated. The so-called company was incorporated by Madam Martina Wesseh, peppercorn wife of Senator Wesseh with board chaired by Chinnaka Wesseh, an illiterate senior brother of the corruption genius "Senator Wesseh". Suffice to say, like Senator Commany Wesseh, many public office holders have abused their offices to protect their personal interests at the expense of national values. Corruption has also had debilitating impacts on the rule of law, human rights and other supportive ingredients of democracy. The implications of such bad governance are seemingly destructive. Corruption has often times been the driving force of primordial interest.

To Dobel (1978) therefore, corruption is "the betrayal of public trust for individual or group gain". Aptly supporting this view was Obayelu (2007) who identifies corruption as "efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefits". It is important to note that corruption is neither system specific nor culture bound (Ogundiya, 2010:233). Corruption is not only found in democratic and dictatorial politics, but also in feudal, capitalist and socialist economies. Christian, Muslim, and traditional leaders are equally bedevilled by corruption (Dike and Obayelu, 2010:233). However, the nature, form, dimension, character and the

severity of corruption differs from one group to other and from one nation to the other. Even though, corruption is more prevalent in the developing world, there are classic cases of corruption in the developed world. Organic experience has shown corruption at a minimal level in the developed world compared to the developing world. The essential reason for the low level of corruption in the advanced democracies is that the control mechanisms are more developed and effective than in the developing countries. The efficacy of the control mechanisms in the advanced democracies further accounts for the relative political and democratic stability that these countries enjoy (Ogundiya, 2010:234). The United Nations Human Development report (1998:11) outlines what corruption entails to include among others “acceptance of money or other rewards for awarding contracts, violations of procedures to enhance personal interests, including kickbacks from development programs or multinational corporations; pay-offs for legislative support; and the diversion of public resources for private use, to overlooking illegal activities or intervening in the justice processes. Other forms of corruption also include nepotism, common theft, over or under pricing, establishing and financing non-existent projects, payroll padding, tax collection and tax assessment frauds.”

Corruption is the bane of governance crisis in Liberia. For instance, when resources meant for the development and improvement at the national or local level is illegally carted away by the leaders and their cohorts. Or how could there be good governance when leaders and their associates are busy dispensing the national treasury for their private gains? It is important to state that there cannot be good governance when the activities of those in governance are against popular participation in politics and when leaders and their cronies are ethnically bias and are largely not accountable to the populace.

### **Governance as a Concept**

The concept of governance has received considerable attention in literature. It refers to the process of formulating policies and implementing them based on several considerations that are premised on respect for the rule of law, and order, provision of necessities that enhance human dignity, observance of fundamental rights, popular participation in the democratic process, equity, transparency, accountability and unhindered access to information amongst others (Nnonyelu, 2013:102). Similarly, Ojo (quoted in Nnonyelu, 2013:102), argues that the maintenance of order and the rule of law is a sine qua non of governance. Conceptually, the discourse on governance has shifted to disaggregating the term into good governance and bad governance or governance crisis (Nnonyelu, 2013: 102). Ninalowo (quoted in Ologbenla, 2010:100) also contends that governance is different from government, and consists “of the totality or administrative functions of the state, with a view to fulfilling terms of social contracts or constitutional obligations to the citizenry, while government refers to position or office of authority to administer the affairs of the state. Africa Leadership Forum (2000) defines it as ‘the ability of a political system (government) to effectively manage resources of the state in such a manner that it is capable of providing for the basic needs of the people and the people are allowed to develop their full potentials under a democratic political framework based on the rule of law’. The basic features of good governance include trustworthiness, integrity, harmony, accountability, openness, public spiritedness, vision; and courage (Africa Leadership Forum, 2000).

To Inokobar and Kumokor, (2012: 139-148), governance is viewed as the process by which a political system achieves such values as accountability, participation, openness (or transparency) and respect for the rule of law and due bureaucratic process. Governance is therefore well-defined by a capacity of the state, or its agent, the government to promote national values and effectively allocate resources to the overall benefit of people in their respective community, to respect their fundamental rights, protect their welfare, and ensure harmonious co-existence among the people while protecting their environment and future. In similar vein, Ogundiya (2010: 202), posited that governance is simply the process that is employed to achieve the noble end of the state which is, the promotion of the common good. Governance whether good or bad depends on how its ‘common goods’ are distributed or implemented.

In Liberia, distributing common goods to the people is often overridden by the urge and craves for primordial values ahead of the national values. According to Nnonyelu (2013: 103), the Liberian situation is replete with instances of mismanagement, misappropriation of public funds. The monopoly of companies and national enterprises for friends and cronies, and satisfaction of personal gains have continued till date. The comprehensive criminalization of the state and primitive accumulation by successive ruling regimes in the country are emblematic of governance failure, or bad governance. Any governance that detracts from promoting the welfare of the people, ensuring their safety, and protecting their lives and property is not worthy of the term. The inability of the Liberian state to provide for its teeming population and moderate the recurring conflicts is a major deficit in its governance profile (Ojo, 2010). In this wise, governance crisis refers to the apparent and obvious inability of public institutions to deliver on infrastructure – water, roads, power, healthcare, education, food, employment and security etc. A regime that is tainted with corruption cannot effectively deliver goods and services to its people. Governance crisis is evident in the corruption in Liberia. Good governance on the other hand, was defined by Eyinla (2000:22), as accountability, security of human rights and civil liberties, devolution of powers and respect for local and statutory autonomy, which all constitute a challenge to democratic regimes. Moreover, good governance has been linked to ‘the extent to which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to improving the public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens, competent

to assure law and order and deliver public services, able to create an enabling policy environment for productive activities, and equitable in its conduct of governance (Landell-Mill and Seragelden, 2000:17). Aptly supporting this view, is the World Bank that sees 'governance' as "the means by which political power is exercised in the management of the country's economic and social resources for development" and 'good governance' as synonymous with sound development management (Potter, 2000: 379). It encompasses a sphere of public sector management; accountability and legal framework for reforms; information, communication and technology; legitimacy of government; competence of governments to formulate appropriate policies, make timely decisions; execute them effectively and deliver social services to the people (Potter 2000:379).

From a critical look at the concept of governance, it can be observed that good governance is pivotal to a successful democratization and development. It should be noted that, for an enduring democratization, the basic tenets of good governance must be well institutionalized and internalized. The wide-ranging management of resources, the goal of development will be achieved if good governance is in place. Corroborating this view was Davis (2003:1), who asserts that proper management of countries economic and social development in an environment devoid of rancour, ill will, strife, struggle and disdain can be achieved in state with good governance. Good governance in Liberia needs democratic stability as the propensity for political and economic plurality to enhance the electorates' choice and peoples' participation (Nnamani and Illoh, 2014: 27).

The problem of governance crisis in Liberia has always been that, while the long-suffering masses are regularly asked to make sacrifices and tighten their belts, the leaders and their cohorts live in randy and indefensible opulence. As far as the issues of crisis in governance and hot chase for primordial values are concerned, we agree with the view that for Liberia, "the beautiful ones are not yet born, while the ugly ones refused to die" (Wilmot, 2000: 54). The point being made in this assertion, is that selfless leaders who will promote national interest over primordial values are non-existence in the country, particularly administration after administration in the republic as evidences by the cases of defections of lawmakers and senior officials of government from one political party to the ruling party of the day which is largely based on personal interests and crave for power relevance in future elections. Fagbadebo, Agunyai and Odeyemi (2014), in alluding to this view, contended that political activities are akin to business venture where personal gains override national interest in service delivery. This explains the prevalence of governance crisis in the midst of abundant resources. This view was corroborated by (Akinboye & Anifowose 2013), when they contend that governance is recognized as the most critical challenge for political and socio-economic development in Africa, and particularly in Liberia. More than one hundred and seventy years after political independence in 1847, the country is still faced with the problem of adopting the right model of governance, but especially it is faced with crisis of will power to execute the available policies and regulations to the letter.

### **Theoretical Analysis**

The theory that best captures the pursuit of primordial interests and governance crisis is the classical model theory by Clifford Geertz. The classical model theory which is titled: "Integrating Revolution" offers an explanation for governance crisis in the new states and on the other hand, how the problems can be overcome. The theory distinguishes between "primordial" values which are interests based on "individualistic gains" which seems to promote (partisans, kinship interests, tribe, region, religion, in laws, and other such groups of interest) above "national" values which are interests based on accountability, rule of law and socio-economic promotion (class, status, part, professional group). Primordial interests by its very nature, (and especially because it is ethnically bias breeds and toughens the problem of selfish and personal aggrandisement) tend to be highly resistant to good governance. National interests, on the other hand, are usually values such as patriotism, loyalty cross-cutting cleavages, honesty and dedication to duty, national interest tend to promote good governance and are therefore, more amenable, to good governance.

Applying this theory to explaining primordial interest and governance crisis in Liberia, it espouses the view that primordial interests (unjust distribution of common goods, ethnic bias, corruption, tribalism, undue celebration of those in governance, looting to satisfy one's ethnic group or lovers, as well as in-laws, friends etc.) promote governance crisis, while national interests (just/fair distribution of common good, respect for human rights, rule of law, accountability and responsiveness) promote good governance.

Additionally, the paper also adopts the elite theory in explaining primordial interests and governance crisis in Liberia's governance system. The theory is of the view that political power resides in a few within the society while the majority are led. Elites, according to the proponents of the theory Gaetano (1939), Michels (1942) have features as wealth, intelligence, special skills, moral character, and hosts of others. The theory holds the view that the society is made of two classes the higher stratum, the elites that are further divided into the ruling class or governing and non-governing elites, and a lower stratum or non-elites. The governing class formulates and implements policies that are binding on the entire people in a nation, and the theory observed that the parochial interests of the elites tend to reflect more than the overall interests of the public on policies formulated and implemented in the nation. The connection of this theory to primordial interests and governance crisis essentially lies within the context of Liberian leaders, their cronies and other public office holders who have allowed selfish interests to override the country's and / or national interests. In Liberia,

public policy meant to promote accountability, popular participation in politics, respect for fundamental human rights and distribution of common goods are left un-implemented, and even when implemented, it is usually done to promote the interests of their cohorts. It is also interesting to note that incessant defection of the political class from one party to the others are based on their primordial interests than national interests as they scramble to be in the power and control of government for now and in the future elections.

Using the elite theory in explaining the quest for primordial interests and governance crisis in Liberia, political elites, especially the state as an institution has failed to conduct chieftain elections since the 1985 general elections. Rather, friends, relations or party members are imposed as caretaker committee to run the affairs of the local government and councils including, mayors, paramount, clans, quarters and general town chiefs which invariably engender bad governance. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that elites and their cohorts (friends, party associates and relations) have had their interests satisfied on several occasions at the expense of national interests, grassroots development and good governance. This no doubt has been the bane of bad governance or governance crisis in Liberia. This view was aptly supported by Young (1979:59), who argued that this is the paradox of African development which in turn, exacerbates the crisis of governance.

### **Governance Crisis in Liberia: The Actions/Roles of Cronies of Public Office Holders**

Governance from the perspective of the democratic theory refers to a system under which leadership (public office holders) and members (people) are collectively and individually accountable for decision-making. This theory suggests participation of all group members as the key to ensuring legitimacy of governance. Essentially, participation engenders peoples' ownership of decisions and therefore fuller commitment to the peoples' objectives. Democratic theory of governance instructively describes a system under which power actually rests with people, who exercise it through the electoral process. Therefore, for leaders to continue to enjoy legitimacy and relevance in office, they have to account for their stewardship in a way that meets peoples' expectations Carrington, DeBuse & Lee, 2008 (cited in Duke, 2011).

Events in Liberia since earlier 1970s have shown that the tidal waves of reversal have been contending with governance in Liberia. Subsequently, governance crisis has been taken as a normal thing and customary in our country and the future seems to be very bleak because of rampant systemic bureaucratic and political corruption. Corruption has reached a high climax such that an average Liberian now associates governance with corruption. The consequences of political corruption are patently manifest: cyclical crisis of legitimacy, fragile party structure, institutional decay, chronic economic problem and underdevelopment and, above all, general governance volatility. In all these, cohorts of politicians or public office holders who are at the same time members of the society play no small role in engendering crisis in governance. It is important to elucidate, as clearly stated earlier in the paper that most researches on crisis of governance in Liberia points accusing fingers to leaders, but that there have been dearth of academic focus on the impact the people or cronies' of politicians (community heads, friends, party members, ethnic group and family relations and even multiple lovers) plays in contributing to governance crisis. Worse homosexuality and lesbianism is no exception in the competing interest of cohorts – politicians' power brokery.

Profound observations have shown that in Liberia, the community or ethnic groups from which public office holders' come, tend to accord undue self-glorification or praise to their representatives to the extent that some of them are inclined to close their eyes on corrupt attitudes while impunity of their corrupt representatives in government take the order of the day. Corroborating this view was the comments of some group or people in the South-Eastern region of Liberia where they openly advocated and commented that President Samuel K. Doe must re-contest as the president of Liberia for the third term even though the constitution and organic laws of the land do not provide for a third term for the presidency. The comments and advocacy, even though guaranteed in freedom of expression, was morally wrong and illegal as these groups of people in the region action threatened and potentially undermined the security of the people and the country.

Moreover, the actions of political Godfathers who are partners or associates of politicians or public office holders across the geo-political zones in satisfying their selfish interests had at one time or the other, engaged in action that resorted into governance crisis in the nation. Godfathers are wealthy and powerful citizens who may be strong business persons or party member who sponsors politicians in an election with the hope to make profit or demands on politicians they have illicitly enthroned on the hungry masses in government. This view was aptly supported by Joseph (1981), who views godfatherism from "prebendal" perspective and contends that:

The holder gets to office based on the agreement that he or she will use such office to satisfy the demands of specific sub-sets of the general population. So, such a candidate remains popular or in office as long as he or she sticks to the agreement. Although, it is a relationship based on interdependency, it is actually a relationship between the weak and the strong.

In Liberia, godfatherism remains an unpronounced ill in the political process since independence. This is because it has configured public office like an eatery which only the godfather alone gives the ticket to whoever he likes and once any beneficiary disobeys him, he gets him or her out of the eatery (Adebanwi 2010). From the foregoing, it is observed that actions of godfathers who are largely partners or associates of political leaders or elites are also perfect recipe of

the governance crisis. This is because these godfathers have the means (money, power and connections) to enthrone and dethrone whoever they want to be in government. The classic cases of former House Speaker Edwin Snowe, former Senate Pro Temp Isaac Nyenabo and lately another former Speaker Hon. Alex Tyler are just to mention a few. All of the mentioned were dethroned because they primarily differ with some of the policies of the president. Crisis becomes prevalent or looms when the sponsored politicians or public office holders after gaining control of government, no longer satisfies the interests of their godfathers. This has been the major obstacles to good governance in some counties in Liberia. For instance, those in governance instead of pursuing national interests of providing public goods to the people, fostering accountability, respect for rule of law, justice in the distributions of social amenities etc., were pre-occupied with satisfying the individualistic gains of their cronies. For instance, there have been cases of severe crisis in governance in River Gee County on miss appropriation of County and Social Development funds by Senator Comnay B. Wesseh and his hired construction company. Howbeit, occasioned by the relation of his wife to the president Sirleaf, the Senator moves around with impunity. This is sharply condemned as state thefts who abused their power corridor to enrich themselves to the detriment of the masses in his work (FORPOH, G. T., (2018). There have been other similar cases in Maryland, Grand Kru and Sione just to name a few. In all these cases, the godfathers ensures the ousting (impeachment or dismissal) of defying godchildren who had acted contrary to the bond. This has had severe implications for participation in politics, accountability, service delivery, respect for the rule of law and good governance not only in the region within the country but the nation state as a whole, because the action of cronies of politicians tend to have made godfatherism phenomenal and parasitic in Liberia's administrative structure.

Furthermore, wealthy citizens and industrialists who are not political godfathers but have close affinity with those in government or public office holders have also been found guilty of the offence of contributing to bad governance or governance crisis in Liberia. This is rather manifested in offering of bribe to public office holders to satisfy certain selfish interests of a wealthy business man. A good example of this, can be seen in the case of the award of contracts referred to as bogus. (Premium Times, 2013). The governance crisis becomes inevitable when the country's resources (ire ore, diamonds, gold, timber, ect.) meant to serve the good of the entire nation is carted away by some group of wealthy business persons who have closed relationship with those in government.

In Liberia, the rot in governance is exhibited by deliberate unruly corrupt action of some key members of the government. For instance, the members of legislature that supposed to exert some measures of check and balances on the executive branch of government in terms of probing the executive members in case of corrupt practices are also found guilty of the same offence they are probing. This view can however be validated by the case of General Audit Commission (GAC) probe involving different heads of government agencies which report audit findings which were swept under the rugs by the power that be because of their implications (Abbah, Abdulhamid, Idris, Hassan, Ekundayo, & Ogunwale, 2012). Another case of miss appropriation of the County and Social Development fund which involved the former Superintendent of Monsterrado Hon. Grace T. Kpan and the former district 16 Representative Hon. Edward S. Forh. A member of the 52<sup>nd</sup> legislature, with the representative being recorded to have advised the scheme as "you put so, you put so". A Liberian saying for illicit deals distribution.

Again, the activities of party loyalists of ruling party at all levels of government have been reinforcing governance crisis in Liberia. Cronies of ruling party have been observed to be using illicit means to ensure their candidates' return to elected positions at the house of representative or senate and when the results of the election is not in their favour, they resort to violence and unconstructive criticism and unhealthy rivalry. The 1985 general and presidential elections being a classic case in point. In that particular case, the presidential election was won by Liberia Action Party's (LAP's) candidate, Hon. Jackson F. Doe. However, President Doe called for a recount of the ballots in Monrovia at Unity Conference Center without the representation of any of the opposition political parties, including the major challenger, LAP. That outcome of the recount overturned the entire election results in favour of the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL) of late President Samuel Kanyon Doe. This kind of anti-democratic practices is unequivocally condemned to the fullest and describes same as a total enemy of state peaceful governance and thus undermines development and growth [FORPOH, G. T., (2016).

This view is also aptly supported by Idowu (2010:52), who contends that an assessment of election history in Liberia would reveal that the quest for credible elections in the country have been marred by a number of security challenges. These include political manipulation, character assassinations, political thuggery, ballot snatching, intimidation, arson, etc. In a similar vein, Rapoport and Weinberg (cited in Joshua, 2013:324-339) stated that the situation immediately after elections is often very sensitive as the acceptance or otherwise of the outcome of elections by cronies of politicians can produce outbreaks of violence. The paper also contends that this was evidenced in the recount of the ballots in Liberia and the subsequent announcement of presidential election in 1985 of Samuel K. Doe as President, followed by cases of riots, violence and civil unrest in most parts of the country and consequently a coup led by the army Commander, Major General Thomas Quiwonkpa. The bad prints following that disputed election remain highly fresh and unforgettable on the mind of all Liberians. There were untold casualties which included destruction of properties, dead of hundreds of our citizens across the country, while others were forced into exile. The incessant cases of electoral violence caused by cronies of politicians and public office holders made Gidado (2010), to contend that the nature, extent of youth involvement in electoral violence, and magnitude of violence associated with elections and in Liberia are posing threats

to the national quest for a stable maintenance of democracy, as well as to the attainment of consolidated democratic governance.

It is imperative to note that Liberian government in an attempt to redeem its image of fighting corruption and impunity has always engaged in series of probe which has yielded little or no success. That said, below are some of the incessant probes that do not yield public reports or any such reports were just treated as business as usual under the immediate past administration which robbed Liberian government and citizens of their scarce resources. In spite of this, many well documented reports on corruption suggest laxity and lack of interest to deal with corruption in cases in Liberia. These reports include the following:

1. The audit report of the National Oil Company NACOL in which the Liberia President's son (Robert Sirleaf) looted and vandalized every cent in the covert of that entity. Robert Sirleaf was indicted for corrupt practices and short changing the Liberians people and country. The mother said, she was response for the loot and rubbery of her son and that was the end of the case.
2. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was engulfed into a high level rubbery scandal involving up to the Minister, Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan. Again, President Sirleaf in a similar mischief and support to her criminal empire, said she would vogue for the Minister Ngafuan character and that was the end of the case.
3. Again another probe of the Liberia Petrol Refinery Company, LPRC involving the president Sirleaf foster son Harris Greaves ended before the investigations got underway, with millions of dollars uncounted for. The President simply ask Mr. Greaves to have resigned and the matter was closed.
4. The probe and the alarming revelations of corruption in the form of capital flight of the nation is also a noticeable unchecked money laundry market that was supported by the former president and her cohorts.
5. The audit probe of the National Port Authority involving the President long time love partner Mr. Rockford Weeks' daughter Antoinette Weeks (Managing Director of the entity) have since been swept under the rugs All these amongst others constitute major challenges to Liberia's presidential system and breeds governance crisis in Liberia (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2013).

### **Policy Redress for Primordial interests and Governance crisis in Liberia**

The utility of this paper lies in its ability to revealing that the primordial interests as a contributing factor to governance crisis in Liberia is not only caused by political leaders, but also by the cohorts of the public office holders who unduly exert pressure on the leaders to satisfy their quest over national interests and these leaders in return loot to fulfil the unquenchable urge of their cronies. In addressing the issue of primordial interests and governance crisis, there is the need for selfless leaders who will be really interested in satisfying national interests over selfish aggrandisement. This view was corroborated by Professor Soyinka (cited in Kennedy-Ukaga, 2007: 25) that leadership is about being selfless, and anyone who wants to be a leader must be ready to sacrifice many things for his/her people. This assertion was reinforced by Owolowo (2012), who points out that "a good leader is meant to be the servant of his/her followers, making necessary sacrifices to achieve greater objectives for the common good". Director (2004:3) advocated for good leaders who are ready to make sacrifice and shun primordial value and embrace national value. Hence, in his words:

A committed leader must simply be competent enough to exercise the duties and responsibilities assigned or trusted to him by virtue of his office and position. Consequently, he / she must at all times uphold the oath of his / her office and put smiles on the faces of his / her people and those who trusted him / her with responsibilities. A true leader does not run away from challenges, just as he / she is not expected to be selfish and or serve narrow interests.

Good governance depends largely on patriotic and selfless leaders who shun their personal gains and that of their cronies for national goals or interests. Liberia needs leaders who will disobey illicit calls from their ethnic groups to steal or loot public treasury and control undue pressure from their cronies.

Also, it is on records that some Liberians are found celebrating or welcoming back home leaders that have been indicted for money laundering and misappropriation of public funds. This should be immediately stopped, as this will earn Liberia no good name in the international system and promote attitudinal change among upcoming leaders. Comparatively, Liberian people should learn from developed nations on how to deal with corrupt leaders. In developed democracies people don't celebrate and extend warm hands to confirmed corrupt leaders rather they publicly criticised and monitor the prosecution process of these corrupt leaders. Liberians should borrow this idea and display such, even if the corrupt person is their family member. This will help to reduce the tendency of stealing and looting in public offices, because when a leader knows that he / she will be openly criticised and his / her prosecution will be monitor by members of his / her family, he / she will not want to be engaged in such malpractices, but when he / she knows that he

/ she will even be praised or be welcomed by his / her ethnic group or friends, he / she will not only steal to satisfy him / herself but to also steal to satisfy his / her cronies quest. This view was aptly supported by Stanislav Andreski (cited in Osoba, 1996: 377), who contends that in order to meet the selfish and unquenchable desires of the rulers (to satisfy the quest of their cronies) for wealth, public resources and common patrimonies are hijacked and privatized, and this often gives rise to what is called “institutionalized robbery of the state by its very custodians”.

Furthermore, there should be critical review of immunity clause in the constitution that exempts serving politicians from prosecution. In Liberia, most leaders and politicians use the immunity clause to loot and arbitrarily dispensed state treasury to quench the primordial interests of their cronies and themselves. This definitely has been the bane of governance crisis in the country. This is because these corrupt politicians would amass huge wealth and be super rich to buy their way to freedom after their tenure in office. For instance, how many of the politicians indicted of corrupt offences while in office are prosecuted after leaving office? Even when they are prosecuted and judged guilty, they are not really sentenced or punished appropriately for such offences. Plea bargaining is usually the common option. This, in itself promotes bad governance.

Finally, government should cut the outrageous cost of governance at all levels. The paper contends that the leveraging of monies and other luxuries in the hands of those in positions of governance is one of the key causative factor of governance crisis in Liberia. To this end, government should show exemplary life by cutting their excesses in terms of cost of governance at all levels of administration, leaders and politicians on the other hand, should let their people (cronies) know that governance is meant to serve the people and not selfish interests of themselves and their cronies. Again, politicians' cronies (ethnic groups, friends, godfathers, party loyalist and lovers, family members, ect.) should understand that even if their son, daughter or friend is the President, Superintendent or District Commissioner, he / she is to serve the overall interests of the country and not privatised individual interests.

## CONCLUSION

It is apt to begin the conclusion of this paper by noting that most of the cases of bad governance or governance crisis being experienced in the country are caused not only by leaders, but by their cronies who perpetually lure or pressurise leaders to steal, loot and misappropriate public funds in order to satisfy their primordial motives. Analyses in this paper mostly concern the roles, people (cohorts or cronies) play in exacerbating governance crisis in Liberia. This is so because it is the view of this paper that this has been a common developmental and governance issue since independence and has being pronounced worse in the administration since the 1980s.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that Liberia has been very unfortunate in terms of the quality of leaders and their supporters who have caused more pains to the nation in terms of electoral violence, riots and undue celebration of corrupt leaders. The paper argues that in Liberia, leadership is not about service to the people but exploitation of national wealth and primitive appropriation of the public office to the benefit of few and not the masses. This accounts for why there have been repeatedly poor service deliveries of public goods, poverty and inequality in spite of the rich endowment of natural resources in Liberia. The masses remained poor and still live like animals, roaming the jungle in search of herds, feeding from garbage dumps, drinking from infested springs and sleeping under bridges. What is however clear from Liberia's historical experience is that few individuals have arbitrarily tried to animalize the majority by the corrupt culture and practices, thereby losing their own humanity and rationality in the process (Nwankwo, 1989: 118-119).

The paper concludes that, that if Liberian leaders and their cronies jettison their primordial interests for national interests, there will be adequate delivery of public goods to the people as well as accountability and participation of all the citizenry in the political governance of the state. This will in the long run reduce governance crisis and deepen the country's democracy.

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