

## Imperatives for Good Governance and Democratic Rule in the Nigerian Fourth Republic

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### Abstract

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The paper argues that despite the utility of good government and democratic rule from 1999 to 2019, their attendant problems have consequential implications due to the nature of political contests in the country at gaining access to political power which to a greater extent is based on malpractices at elections as the votes of the electorates no longer count and other electoral crimes associated with political apathy in Nigeria. The paper identifies the inability of democratic institutions in the country to carry out their constitutionally assigned races in the political process in the period under review and the crisis of legitimacy on the part of the political leadership while the nation for good governance in terms of the proper, fair and equitable allocation of resources for the achievement of the need and purpose of the state which is the promotion of common good remain at a standstill. The paper suggests possible solutions like strong democratic institutions and viable political systems/parties with the observance of ingredients of good governance imperatives. The paper makes use of secondary data to analyze the study, while it adopts the democratic governance theory of democratic relativity as the theoretical framework to mid-wife the study.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Democratic Institutions, Development, Good Governance, Political Pluralism

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### Introduction

Contemporary ideas of democratic rule were designed majorly by nations and institutions across the world which aim to define the limits of public power and the relationship between the rulers and the ruled (Kuna, 2005:26). The task of consolidating democratic rule is deepening, and sustaining it against the flow of instability in Nigeria requires change or restructuring of both democratic institutions and attitudinal behaviours (Umar, 2002:120). The general acceptance of democracy (democratic rule) as the preferred form of good governance is incontestable. This is based on the participatory advantage democracy affords the people in the selection and election of their leaders and representatives. They guaranteed some recipes for good governance and the fundamental human rights of all abiding citizens (Oke, 2010:32) Though democracy has a long tradition, the notions regarding its essence and grounds of its justification have been revised over time. Nevertheless, Bryce (1921) cited in Gauba (2003) finds the justification for democracy in the concept of relativity, by comparing its advantages and disadvantages with other forms of government, which is the welfare of the people (Gauba, 2003:423).

In Nigeria, sustaining the gains of development through consistent democratic rule and good governance remain huge challenges that have brought the nation into a coma ( Ozohu – Sulaiman, 2016:81). The contradictions which have arisen from the democratic transition and the stages of democratization have brought about much inquiry of the importance in the existing models and institutions of democracy to the reality of contemporary African socio-political developments (Jega, 2005:2).

According to Ozohu – Sulaiman (2016) that:

The third wave of democratization of the late 1980s has ignited an irreversible process of profound social transformation in Africa. Hitherto, described as a continent of mindless and despotic political leadership, the current socio-political realities of Africa suggest that authoritarian rule can no longer be tolerated (Ozohu – Sulaiman, 2016:80)

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Democracy (democratic rule) means a representative form of government with a participatory decision-making system (being collective), accountability, transparency, and the guarantee of human and civil rights entrenchment if observed adequately. It is a consensual system as its legitimacy emerges from an acceptance of the fairness and transparency of its processes for elections into democratic institutions and the policy-making circle (Agagu, 2011:74) The issue of democracy and its institutions as indicators of good governance and development in any nation are so vital and makes for continuous reform in the electoral system in any country very imperative (Gberevbie, 2014:148).

Imperatives for good governance and democratic rule are incentives by which democracy becomes more broadly and profoundly legitimize before the people and they however are likely to break down or collapse its structures. They normalize the expansion of citizens' access, development of democratic citizenship culture, broadening of leadership entries, training, and other civil society functions (Ojo, 2006:8). Nigeria runs a democratic system of government that is expected to promote all democratic values including fiscal discipline, due process, freedom for mass media, civil societies amongst others (Odo, 2015:7).

Contemporary debates on the imperatives of Good Governance and Democratic rule which follow the commencement of the democratisation process in the Third World countries have been heavily influenced by the swift currents of globalization and Western triumphalism which have accompanied the end of the cold war. This transformation was directed at displacing the nature and character of political leadership with the attendant objectives of political restructuring of the political system which relates to human and social problems that made them difficult for individual and group actualization on the path of good governance. Also, the democratization process welcomes social change, democratization process welcomes social change, democratic institutions, capacity building, institutional renewals that foster enduring partnerships among states, civil societies, and organised private sectors, the promotion of good governance, and interrogation of the nexus between it and sustainable democratic rule. These ideas have been advocated by the united nations that good governance, human rights, and democratic rule are mutually inclusive and have been associated with transparency, accountability, the rule of law, political pluralism, effective participation, access to education, good health facilities, creation of jobs and other responsiveness to necessities of life. In Nigeria, with the emergence of the fourth democratic Republic, good governance and sustainable democratic rule have strengthened the relationship between the government and the governed with their problems associated with public and private partnerships.

According to Umar (2009):

Democratic consolidation (rule) is not just about how democratic institutions, structures, and procedures are established and nurtured. It is as well and perhaps, more importantly, about how these democratic values and processes get embedded in the psyche of individuals or groups in society (Umar, 2009: 18; Umar, 2009:19)

In 2004, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution that, figures out the essential elements of democracy, which include:

- Separation and balance of powers;
- Independence of the judiciary;
- A pluralistic system of political parties and organizations;
- Respect for the rule of law
- Accountability and transparency
- Free, independent, and pluralistic media
- Respect for human and political rights (Meyer – Resende, 2007:2)

Democracy can therefore not be attained without a system of democratic rule which divides power among three co-equal branches, each with certain prerogatives of power, and where the functions of the courts are to channel power-related conflicts through legal processes which use agreed legal reasoning to interpret and apply pre-existing law (Bassiouni, 1998:4)

### **Conceptualising Good Governance and Democratic Rule.**

There are enormous pieces of literature on the concepts of Good governance and democratic rule offered by theorists, writers policymakers, and analysts of both concepts to their understanding. To Ogundiya (2010), Good governance can be analyzed as the process that is employed to achieve the noble end of the state. This simply means the art of governing a people within a given territory or a state. It consists of two essential elements of the state and the procedures of the legislative, judicial, and executive and administrative bodies at all the tiers of government (Ogundiya, 2010:203).

In a similar view, Arowolo & Aluko (2012) noted that:

Good governance includes the capacity to formulate and implement sound policies and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interaction. It has been closely 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 conducts (Arowolo & Aluko, 2012:798)

Corresponding to the above assertions, Asobie (2012) noted that:

Government is the process of organizing and mobilizing people and resources to achieve a common goal. It is the process of motivating and enrolling people to participate actively in dreaming dreams and seeing the vision of a people's future and then encouraging them to own the vision and use their energies, resources, and contacts to work cooperatively together to realise the visions, dreams, and possibilities... There is good governance that embodies certain standard principles; transparency, accountability, civic participation, achievement of results, and impact (Asobie, 2012:7)

Ladan (2002) noted that good governance is the responsible use of political authority to manage a nation's affairs (Ladan, 2002): 141) while Saliu (2012) noted that governance is perceived to be a series of public activities which means the making of choices in the public interest for the betterment of a nation. It has to do with democratic institutions or structures mandatory on decisions, participation, coordination, and the service delivery of efficient needs of the people (Saliu, 2012:115). It refers to the process of decision-making and the methods whereby decisions are implemented with the following characteristics:

- Participating – encouraging wide citizens' participation in the decision-making process;
- Consensus-oriented – attempting to get decisions based on general agreement;
- Transparent – being open to criticism/questions in decision-making processes;
- Responsive – listening and responding to the demands of its people;
- Effective and efficient – providing social services; and
- Equitable and inclusive – not excluding any sectors of the population, most importantly the vulnerable and challenged ones. (Pawley & Anderlini, 2004:36)

To Adetoye & Omilusi, (2016), Good governance is the process whereby public institutions perform general affairs in public dimensions and oversee public resources, and safeguards the entrenchment of human right in the domain of the rule of law (Adetoye & Omilusi, 2016:574) while Omotoso views it as the use of Political Powers to manage a nation's public affairs and to shape its economic and process in line with the public interest (Omotosho 2010:146) Democratic rule is the practice whereby the ideas of democratic principles are entrenched in manifestation and implementation through people-centered apparatus. They are all based on the wills of the people as they are best suitable for permitting people to have access to governance, freedom, participation, and choice (Asaju, 2014:1). To Abdullahi (2014), democratic rule is a process to the institutionalization of democracy for the attainment of political and economic development of the country as from transforming an authoritarian system into a democratic type especially in the exercise of civilian administration (Abdullahi, 2014:17). According to Ozohu-Sulaiman (2016) that:

...in democratizing societies, the conceptual vehicle that connects the elements of social change is democratic rule and practices which the political leadership must spread across the institutional landscape of governance. Democratic (rule) governance would mean building institutions and rule that are not just efficient but also fair, and that are developed through political voice. Foremost among these institutions are: an independent but dependable electoral system to superintend democratic transition, and the institutionalization of an enduring legislative system to provide the legal framework for democratic good governance capacity building and institutional renewal referring to the comprehensive reform of the public service to provide the required institutional support for democratic (rule)... (Ozohu – Suleiman, 2016:81)

Lawal & Olukayode (2012) noted that democratic rule entails the presence of civilian authorities where political actors and democratic institutions are sustained views of regular elections, freedom of speech, the entrenchment

and observance of the rule of law (Lawal & Olukayode, 2012: 449), while Okoroafor (2010) viewed the democratic rule as the type that is rooted in the consent of the citizens in the belief that people have the right to choose and run their government. It connotes rules regarding principles of open, free, and fair elections, the acceptance of majority decisions while respecting minority's rights as guaranteed by their constitutions (Okoroafor, 2010:174; Okeke, 2014: 232) Democratic rule is the actual exercise of the principles of democracy, its elements and subsidiaries which are needed towards achieving the goal of democratic ideas (Adejumobi & Kehinde, 2007:98)

### Importance Of Good Governance

- i. Efficient processes – due to their routine repeats in the process and consistency of tasks, it has brought huge attachment to its relevance to the public sector.
- ii. Visibility of errors – the routines of events and the consistency as it quickens and highlights nonconformities in the process.
- iii. Reduction in costs – It eliminates wastages from scrap, rework, and other non-value-added processes.
- iv. Smooth running process
- v. Financial sustainability
- vi. Clarity
- vii. Reputation
- viii. Culture (Parker, 2017:2) Rule of law, institutional and democracy dimension – the rule of law principles are
- ix. Properness and human rights, the democracy-related principle is transparency and participation and the modern value-related principles are effectiveness and accountability (Addink, 2017:3).

### Elements Of Democratic Rule.

- i. **Choice of people** – It allows citizens to choose their representatives through periodic elections. The free choice in picking observed from time to time – The popular sovereignty.
- ii. **Participation of people** – They engaged in public affairs, jobs, and politics as the bases for democratic rule where preference is usually given to collective rule and participation either through representative or direct democracy.
- iii. **Fundamental Human Rights**– Democratic rule is a basic ingredient for the observance of human dignity and the preservation of human honours. Rights that are inviolable and inseparable should not be suspended. The rights are incorporated in the supreme law of the state. The liberalism of freedom, equality, and dignity of the individual.
- iv. **Rule of law** – It refers to the strict adherence to the fundamental workings of the law as stipulated in the constitution. The use of constitutions to limit government by law.
- v. **The organs of Government** – Their strict adherence to the principles of separation of powers among the legislature, executive, and judiciary in the discharge of their constitutional roles in the democratic rule as contained in any federal system of government like Nigeria (Democracy nd :1; Nowak, nd : 3)
- vi. Civil society organization in the strengthening of elements of democratic rule as a new approach. The inclusion of civil societies as another sphere of politics is highly relevant and essential for proving knowledge of democratic performance (Castano, 2010:3)
- vii. **Democratic political institutions** – These are institutions designed to ensure the legitimate or popular authorization of public officials, their steady accountability, and responsiveness to the people. This is usually achieved through regular competitive elections and public opinion (Beetham, 1998: 24)
- viii. The emergence of national democratic conscience that is opposed to anti-democratic nationalism in the area of identity politics and minority political rights of decisions (Touraine, 1998:93; Halperin, 1993:527)
- ix. Investigative Agencies – They must inspire great confidence in the view of the people to instill confidence, quality manpower, and the absence of taint in the investigations apparatus. As they should not be tools in the hands of the Government in power against her opposition from an outside power.
- x. Spineless bureaucracy committed to their advancement and impartiality, and focus on a robust based economy of merit, arms-length lending capacities to economic freedom (Sibal, 2017:3)
- xi. Political Tolerance – Democratic societies are politically tolerant of democratic rule. As such, majority and minority existence must be upheld to safeguard their identities, cultures, and political expressions (Meher, nd:1)
- xii. Sustainable Electoral System – It affects the number of political organizations and parties in a democratic country. The more electoral space, the more it accommodates more representations and many political parties emerge (Khalil – Zadeh, 2016:3). Pluralism which democratic rule values finds expression in elections as an ingredient of popular choice (Agbu, 2016:4)

- xiii. Media Pluralism – It guarantees the citizens' fundamental rights to freedom of expression and information. Media freedom is a veritable tool in any democratic rule (European Federation of Journalists, 2017:2)
- xiv. Consensus building and social inclusion. They require wide consultations among all stakeholders. The system must cater to all citizens to improve their general well-being (Cunningham, 1987:96)

### **Nexus Between Good Governance and Democratic Rule (Symmetrical Relationship)**

The arguments center on the connection between Good governance and democratic rule which represent the availability and sustainability of social structures like participation, responsibility transparency, accountability, effective and efficient social services, equitability, and efficient social services, equitability and all-inclusive sectors side of good governance and the provisions of all elements of democratic rule like rule of law, civil society engagement, the fundamental human rights, political pluralism, periodic elections, people's choices democratic institutions, political tolerance minority and voting rights, separation of power and sustainable electoral reform/system on the other hand. It stands as the synergy between the state and the wish of the people. To Agara & Okonkwo (2019), this nexus represents affirmation that democratic consolidation breeds citizens' participation, public trust, and confidence which results in the political, social, and economic development of the political system (Agara & Okonkwo, 2019:3) As such, there is a strong correlation and affinity between good governance and democratic rule.

According to Lissac (nd) that;

A peaceful and productive society is based on effective state institutions. Good governance in this sense means effective and efficient structures which provide optimal support to citizens in leading a safe and productive life in line with their desires and opportunities. Essentially, this involves a combination of democracy, the social welfare state, and the rule of law. The promotion of good governance goes beyond the government sector and includes all irrelevant actors from the private sector and society. The aim is to balance interests and focus on common goals, particularly reducing poverty and providing access to state services for all to make administrative structures participative, effective, and solution-oriented (Lissac, nd: 2).

Udeh (2017) noted that good governance thrives better where there are democratic rules and no exceptions. The success of democratic rule is contingent on strong democratic institutions that produce good governance in any system, especially in Nigeria (Udeh, 2017:148). The conditions for good governance depend on the availability and consolidation of democratic attributes/elements, it entails the respect and protection of fundamental human rights, abiding by the rule of law, running an inclusive government of transparent effective, and efficient service delivery with periodic accountability process or platform before the people (Gberevbie, 2014:137).

The development of effective democratic and public sector institutions are two-dimensional components of any politics. It is through an improved level of good governance that the benefits of democratic rule can have direct impacts on the lives of citizens. In a growing world, the democratic rule should become more innovative in adapting to new technology and evolving citizens' aspirations and expectations (NDI, nd:1) since accountability cannot be forced without transparency and the rule of law, accountability is a key instrument of good governance for democratic rule, to the private sector and civil society organisations, as the society's well-being rests on ensuring that every citizen feels that they have a stake in the common project. Institutional building and the promotion of good governance demand simultaneous commitment to democratic rule (Sharma, 2007:33; Adeosun, 2012:6) To Ogunniya (2010) good governance forms the philosophical foundation upon which democratic rule and its elements are rested. Democratic rule dictates who constitutes the legitimacy from the people and wields power in the state and how they are to exercise such while good governance views or upholds harmony with public good as a democratic rule is subject to moral judgments and moral questioning on public interest (Ogunniya 2010:205; Omotosho, 2008:6) The presence of good governance depends on the suitability and workability of democratic rule in a country.

### **Evolution Of Democratic Rule in The Nigerian Fourth Republic**

Notwithstanding the focus and emphasis of this study which is on the fourth republic of Nigeria concerning imperatives of good governance and democratic rule, it is also appropriate to x-ray the historical political system of Nigeria in the first republic (1960-1966), second republic (1979-1983) and the third abortive republic (1991-1998). Nigeria had one form of political system to another other over the decades (Parliamentary/cabinet and presidential systems of government) in our political journey. Various political parties emerged in those republics

with ethnic and tribal colouration or sentiments. The collapse of those democratic rules could mainly be traceable to the incursion of the military into power as it was the emergent trend in the 1960s – Late 1990s in Latin America, Asia, Middle-East and Africa due to the contagious effects of military adventurism then with short or few years of democratic rule but longer years or reign of interrupted military regimes during those periods. The fourth republic has been an exception due to many factors that have kept the military from governance from 1999 to date. The enduring democracy with good governance has metamorphosed into sustainable democracy through its dividends to the people through the key implementation of sustainable development goals, ingredients of good governance, and the observance of elements of democratic rule, the democracy has now been consolidated, however, with some challenges inherent in social and political change and civilization for human and state developments. Aluaigba (2009) noted that the demise of the first, second, and third abortive republics was majorly due to substantial attempts by the political class to prevent their opponents from meaningful political participation on one side, and the refusal of the military to give Nigerian a model of freedom of choice of government, democratic taste and consolidation of the existing civilian government to survive and grow (Aluaigba, 2009:56)

### **Democratic Rule in the Nigerian Fourth Republic**

According to Nyewusira & Nweke (2012) that;

In appraising democratization in Nigeria, it is imperative to examine the structural conditions catalyzing or limiting the phenomenon. It is an incontrovertible fact that the military played the role of architects and building blocks of the Fourth Republic. The Military government of General Abdulsalami Abubakar promulgated Decree No. 24, 1999 known as the 1999 Constitution. This decree was published less than one month after the inauguration of the civilian government on 29th May. The implication was that the transition from military to civil rule was not based on any democratic constitution (Nyewusira & Nweke, 2012:4).

The above quote implies that the military midwived democracy reluctantly and did it in a militarized manner. The fourth democratic rule culminated in the nation's political landscape which started amidst expectations and hope. It has witnessed six (6) general elections: 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019) with many mixed feelings, and marked with controversies related to electoral violence, political instability, etc. (Yagboyaju, 2011:93) It is generally expected that such elections to enhance good governance with the ultimate goal of ensuring the legitimacy of the people and the welfare of Nigerians (Agbu, 2016:6). Despite the stability in the nation and the system, the citizens, are working under severe stains and stresses to adequately and effectively democratize good governance and political participation but being dissected by greed, godfatherism corruption electoral malpractices and other variables (Omotoso & Kehinde, 2016:14)

Elections play vital roles in deepening democratic rule as they enable the governed to decide who governs them. Credible elections remain a critical indicator of democratic consolidation, peaceful power change and the rule engagement of a multi-party system are all hallmarks in the fourth republic (Osaghe, & Adamu, nd:50).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopted a pluralist theory of democracy as its theoretical framework. The theory believes in the system of political participation of citizens and parties. It recognizes the existence of varied interests of the people and their groups formed for the sake of protesting and promoting their interests as all groups are allowed to take part in the political process. It is a theory in which political power is fragmented among the branches of government, sharing powers between states and a multitude of private and individuals. It ensures more politicization of the people in all spheres and more politicization of the people in all spheres of life under mass participation in political decisions (Jahari, 2009:392). It represents a social system that provides for the co-existence of a variety of social customs, cultural traits, and others as they participate in the political process under uniform democratic institutions. Attempts to maintain stability and peace in conflict-ridden societies as it emphasizes power, interests of state, leadership, and political culture (Gauga, 2003: 265; Cunningham, 2002:82) Proponents writers, and theorists of the theory include James Madison, Robert Dahl, Charles Lindblom, David Truman, Seymour Martins Lepset, Arthur Betley, James Burnham, H. d. Lasswell, Harry Eckstein, S.T. Beer, Myron Weiner, Earl Ltham, and others. They agreed in their philosophical thoughts that in the political system, policies are made by mutual consultation and exchange of opinions between various groups. The sovereign power of the state should be distributed in a way that the various constituent groups have a share in it.

The linkage of the theory to the study lies in the fact that good governance and its output are to be derived from the democratic rule where pluralism variations in interests and multidimensional decisions can flourish and hold sway. That is, citizens have varied interests in the state project. The theory however suffers some defects like:

- i. It undermines the sovereign position of the state by laying much emphasis on social groups, as it ignores the importance of statehood.
- ii. Despite the theory being masses oriented, the elites still have their ways as political leaders and stakeholders in the scheme of things.
- iii. Critics point out that the pluralist theory of democracy only focuses on the decision-making process. It overlooks those issues on which no decision could be taken though might be crucial.
- iv. It doesn't guarantee internal democracy amongst the various interest or social groups.

### **Imperatives of Good Governance and Democratic Rule**

- Genuine democracy should be divided and consolidated across the political based on the rule of law and citizens oriented electoral system.
- Issue-based governance where the attributes and characteristics of it are entrenched- accountability and transparency.
- Focused leadership – Political leadership of the political system should ensure dividends of democracy are delivered to the people in terms of the provision of social infrastructures with visionary value.
- Proper utilisation of human and natural resources for the good of all should be advocated by all well-meaning citizens through far-reaching economic policies drive.
- The government provides enabling politics environment for credible elections to earn a national and international image good reputation.
- Imperative that promotes constitutionalism.
- Imperative for sustainable development that will enhance socio, political and economic investment.
- The imperative of the cooperation of arms of government in a democratic dispensation. It is to be focused on collaborative efforts within their constitutional responsibilities to formulate and implement effective governance laws and policies.
- Tackling corruption as it remains a big stumbling block to good governance and democratic ride. From party finance, and vote buying to political corruption of the electoral system need to be tackled appropriately.
- Tackling poverty remains a serious problem for any system. It affects one fundamental human right as one's vote is being bought over on account of what to eat, and drink" by desperate politicians and political parties.
- Availability and sustenance of basic democratic institutions, the tendencies in institutions building and strengthening internal democracy
- Reconstituting and reforming the military. There was a clear consensus that if the constitution is not to live under constant threat then, the capacity of the military to seize power at will had to be removed so as not to endanger the early sustenance of democracy. The military must learn how to be structured under democratic rule.
- Imperative in decentralization and devolution of powers. This will allow the various leaders of thoughts, opinions, and interest groups in greater public participation in governance and public affair.
- Imperative of federalism as the best mode of representation based on something more than territorial constituencies.
- Imperative for civil society organisations to play a vital role in democratic purposes and consolidation of good governance. They are to have a positive impact on governance as they will have the capacity to act as watchdogs to ensure that democratic rule is effective and serves the needs of the public (Ogunbiyi, 2020:3; kpundeh, 1992:33; Mbaku, 2020: Mlambo, Zubane& Mlambo, 2019:5; Rossouw, 2019:2 Osaghae & Adamu, nd; 4; Osinbayo, 2018: 11; Kolawole, 2013:131; Omotoso, 2010:146; omoworere, 2010:6).

### **Conclusion**

According to Aluaigba (2009) that;

To say that the institutionalization and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria (Fourth Republic) are less significant is to underestimate the best pathway to development given the complex political terrain in Nigeria as a country exists. The only sure approach to overcoming the myriad of obstacles confronting Nigeria's efforts at advancement is to ensure that democracy finds a permanent abode in the country (Aluagba, 2009:75).

The study has been able to establish the efficacy of democratic rule when it utilizes the embodiments of good governance by exhibiting accountability, transparency, participation in service delivery, rule of law, separation of powers, efficient and effective services, equitable and inclusive system, etc. The above rest on sustainability and consolidation of democratic rule where it must allow pluralism, the institutionalisation of democratic processes from a multi-party system, independence of electoral agency, periodic elections, equal participation presence of civil society organizations free media political tolerance, to consensus building, and free and fair elections with the citizens' free choice of who governs them at one point in time to the other. The sustenance of democratic rule through good governance is one of the pathways to democratic consolidation with its imperatives for good governance in the symmetrical order of power to the people.

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