

ANALYZING THE FOUNDATION OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: PANACEA FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper tends to analyze the foundations of corruption in Nigeria, as a means of hypothetical remedy of the dangers done, looking forward to a proper development strategy of Nigeria. The work utilizes data through secondary sources and relies on the extractive theory as a framework of analysis to explore incidences of corruption and its effects on Nigeria's developmental strides. It identifies causes of corruption to include poverty, pressure from families, community ethnic loyalties, amongst others. It recommends among other strategies, the implementation of stiff penalties, such as execution of corrupt people, leadership recruitment by merit and the provision of basic amenities as solution to the corrupt nature of the society.

Keywords: *Corruption, Development, Society.*

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a social menace that has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian polity. Generally, it has been acknowledged that corruption and its practices are both endemic and systemic in both public and private sectors of the Nigerian economy. The debilitating effects of corruption on the country are enormous. It affects the routine processes of governance both in public and private sectors, and it pollutes the business environment generally. It also undermines the integrity of government and public institutions.

In the words of Obasanjo (2009),

Corruption has been responsible for the political instability of successive government since the first republic. Every coup since then has been in the name of stamping out the disease called corruption. Unfortunately, the cure turned out to be worse than the disease. And Nigeria has been worse for it. Nigeria's external image took a serious bashing, as our beloved country began to fixture on every corruption index.

This statement shows the commonality of corruption in Nigeria which has permeated all, or aspect of the society. For instance, beyond the mere enjoyment of public funds, the amassing of wealth by illegal means does not seem to trouble Nigerian.

Today, Nigerians applaud and tolerate ill-gotten wealth which in reality is money stolen from public coffers. This is a pointer to the fact that corruption is endemic in Nigeria. It has permeated into every facets of the society; the family, the church and even the traditional systems are not left out of this contagious disease.

Corruption therefore, affects the developmental efforts of successive government in Nigeria. This has been responsible for the non-completion of projects and programmes that would have helped in alleviating the sufferings of Nigerians. Corruption has been adjudged to be responsible for Nigeria's underdevelopment. The revelation by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Transparency International concerning looted resources by political office holders, civil servants and private businessmen, is alarming to the extent that one ponders whether the menace can actually be stamped out in the country.

This situation poses a challenge which this paper sets out to address. In doing this, we will examine the concepts corruption, and development, causes of corruption, and its effect on Nigeria's developmental efforts. At the end suggestions on how to stamp-out corruption in Nigeria will be outlined.

CONCEPTUALIZING CORRUPTION AND DEVELOPMENT.

CORRUPTION

The concept defies a single comprehensive and universally accepted definition. It will be a long and cumbersome process to come up with a universally shared definition of the word corruption. For the purpose of this work, however, we adopt the following definitions in making analysis of what corruption is.

According to SADC (2007), corruption is the abuse, or complicity in the abuse of private or public power, office or resources for personal gain. This definition has the following features:

- (a) It recognizes that corruption takes place in both private and public sectors, and
- (b) It holds individuals and institutions that are involved in the abuse of power, office and authority vicariously responsible for corruption. Chinhambo and Shumba (2007).

Inherent in the above definition is that, corruption is the diversion of fund, illegal procurement of properties, misappropriation and mismanagement of funds among others by both the private and public organizations.

In a similar fashion, the World Bank (1997) defines corruption as:

The abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abuse for gain when an official accepts, solicits or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribe, to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can also be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs, through patronage, nepotism, the theft of state assets or diversion of state revenue.

Chaturvedi, A.A opines corruption is behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because regarding pecuniary or status gains or violate rules against exercise of certain types of private, regarding influence, bribery, value influence. Appeals to vote on the ground of redigim race, cast community, promote enmity between classes are some of common corrupt practices, lack of integrity or dishonesty (especially susceptibility to bribery) use of a position of trust for dishonest gain.

These definitions are broad enough to cover most of the obvious corrupt acts of humans. They depict a situation where pervasion of integrity or state of affairs take place through bribery, favour or moral depravity; when at least two parties have interacted to change the structure or processes of society or behaviour of functionaries in order to provide dishonest, unfaithful or defiled situations.

Conversely, the Political Bureau (1987) identify corruption characteristics to include the inflation of government contracts in return for kickbacks; frauds and fabrication of accounts in the public service, examination malpractices in our educational institutions including universities; the taking of bribes and pervasion of justice among the police, the judiciary and other organs for administering justice, and the various heinous crimes against the state in the Business and Industrial sectors of our economy: collusion with multinational companies such as over invoicing of goods and foreign exchange swindling, hoarding and smuggling.

In Nigeria, corrupt acts are called such slangs as kickbacks, to shake hands, to understand, to be wise, returns breakfast, drinks, kola, brown envelopes, shake body, roger etc.

However, in whatever way corruption is defined, it involves acts which are perceived to be against public interest or to violate certain legal and moral laws and principles and some of these acts are directly or indirectly harmful to the society. It is often considered evil as it affects efficiency and economic system. It also affects the success of policy implementation, which is crucial for development.

DEVELOPMENT

The concept of development has proved much resistance to a unilateral definition. Development is a multi-dimensional process that normally connotes change from less to more desirable state. Ujo (1995) opines that, development is beyond economic indicators. He maintains that development is both a physical process and a state of mind. The transformation of institution is one aspect, and other aspect is that the thinking of the people must change.

From certain perspectives, a developed society is one which experiences a progressive growth in the Gross National Product (GNP) or per Capita income. It is one that experienced sustained growth. Iyoha (1996). What this means is that development is completely an economic issue understood and explain in terms of an increase in the GDP of a country.

According to Seers (1969), analysis of development is important in its emphasis on equality as well as growth. He argues that the basic question to ask about a society or country's development is: what has been happening to poverty, and unemployment? If all these have declined from high level then beyond doubt, there has been a period of development of the society or country concerned. The above assertions of development are based on the improvement of the living condition of the citizens. So in essence, development involves human, socio-economic and political upliftment in the society.

Similarly, Rodney (1981) sees development as a multi-sided process, at the level of the individual, it implies increasing skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. At the level of the social groups development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships, which encompass survival against natural, real and imagined human enemies.

Sorkaa (2005) crowns it by asserting that development is a product of a manner of production of goods and services in a society from the society's resources.

To properly understand issues of corruption and development in Nigeria's context, the concept of extractive corruption theory will be adopted. This thesis posits that the State is the stronger part in the State-Society relationship. The state is symbolized by the ruling class/elite while the ruled represents the society. Significantly, the ruling elite is the strongest force in society. This elite or class uses the state apparatus as its instrument to extract based on the experience of the new-patrimonial states in particular. Put differently, the theory posits that the state is not only the strongest force in society, but also many centres of powers. Okechukwu and Inya (2011).

The theory also emphasizes the well-known expression that all power tend to corrupt, and absolute power corrupt absolutely. That is, the more political power is concentrated exclusively in the hands of few individuals, the greater the temptation for power abuse, selfish wealth-seeking and primitive accumulation. Okechukwu and Inya (2011).

The theory also posits that the ruling elite use and misuses the power of the state primarily to safeguard their own corporate interests, to the detriment of the majority. They use violence, force and persuasion to command respect. They may use sophisticated institutional arrangements like presidentialism, dominant-multi-single-party system, and the cooption of rivals in order to restrict participation and power sharing.

The theory is also characterized by new-patrimonialism that is, a kind of political system where there is pervasive and patron-client structures, the non-distinction between public and private pursuit and strong political weakness exist.

In truly patrimonial system there is no distinction between public and private, and the modern idea of corruption will make no sense because the ruler's personal income is the same as the government revenue. There is no nepotism because there are no criteria for appointment to office other than the ruler's favour.

In Nigeria, the ruling elite uses or misuses state power to plunder resources which would have been used for the country's development for their personal gains. Most of the resources which are ear-marked for development projects develop wings and fly to people's pockets (elite). It is sad to note that elite in Nigeria have established hegemonic circle who siphoned the country's wealth for personal use. They are composed of rather small elite of politically and economically dominating families. Their corrupt acts are responsible for Nigeria's underdeveloped.

FOUNDATION OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Generally, the major causes of corruption can be linked to the nature of the economy of a particular society. This means that, it is the economic situation of a society that determines the behavioural pattern predominately found in such society. The nature of the Nigerian economy and the way it has been managed largely account for the mode of economic behaviour of the various actors in Nigeria. Strictly speaking, the following are causes of corruption in Nigeria:

- a. **Poverty:** The current rate of poverty in Nigeria stood at 95 percent. Therefore, people believe that corruption is heightened by the pervasive and chronic poverty, high level of material deprivation and other structural inequalities. Considering this, Shamija (2006) asserts that, corruption is a mechanism adopted by Nigerian to cope with or avert poverty, particularly in the urban centres where the high cost of living may be an inducement for corruption. In a situation where there is inadequate wage and non-payment of salaries in most cases to workers, corruption provides a means of augmenting one's legitimate income. In line with the above assertion, Ayua (2001) notes that, there is a low and declining civil service salary and promotion that is not based on performance, dysfunctional government budgets and delays in the release of budgets funds, including pay. He maintains that under such conditions and circumstances officials deliberately refuse to act or delay action in order to coerce some payment out of citizens or firms.
- b. **Cultural Foundations:** Bedford (2000), in an attempt to contextualize Nigerians corruption identifies tribal loyalties as the foundation of corruption. Therefore, our culture seems to fuel some corruption practices. The sharing of bribes and favours has become the order of the day. There is hardly the motivation to become honest. This has become a subculture where corruption is accepted to be the normal course of life with the obvious risk of it becoming institutionalized. The traditional culture has internalized the concept of the "big man" marked by ostentation wealth and numerous clients, retainers, and hangers-on. The concept of "big man" here refers to a person with several

dependents that he must provide for, own houses and fleet of cars appropriate to his status. This explains why many Nigerian indulged in corrupt practices. Again, pressure from extended families combined with ethnic loyalties provides fertile grounds for the growth of corruption. These pressure force officials to indulge in sharp practices in order to find employment for their kinfolk whether they have requisite skills or not. Ethnic groups also jostling for precious administrative and economic positions usually forced by whatever means possible to gain access to and control strategic areas of administration and economy. Once in these positions all methods (whether legal or illegal) are employed to ensure that their kinfolk have what is referred to in Nigeria's parlance as "our share of the national cake", not minding whether it is fair or whether the imbalance so created is blatantly unreasonable Ayua (2001). In fact, the surviving of the poor on the rich, more so, during the festive period fuel corruption. The case of the Almagiri explains more. Where begging is seen as way of life and the rich is under obligation by culture to provide for the sustenance of these people the tendency is that corruption must thrive.

- c. **Inability of Government to Sanction Corruption:** According to Shamija (2006), the seeming reluctance of government to sanction corruption creates the impression of support. Media report show that government is fond of setting investigation panels and commissions of inquiries whose investigations or findings and recommendations are never made public or implemented. For instance, the move by EFCC and ICPC in fighting corruption has not yielded expected fruitful results. At best the corruption fight has taken the dimension of persecution of passive opponents of the government in power in a situation where a corrupt public office holder is made a saint simply because he or she has carpet-crossed to the ruling party sets a bad precedence. If the fight against corruption must succeed, there should be no sacred cow equity before the law should not be negotiated in that way corruption war is not won. The rule of law which is the bane of every democratic society must be upheld.
- d. **Weak Institutions of Government:** Another breeding ground for corruption in Nigeria is our weak institutions of government. Corrupt tendencies are further enhanced when governmental institutions are weak. For example a tax imposes confiscation rates may fuel bribe-taking behaviour, as tax payers will prefer to bribe and pay less tax. This brings to mind the administration of the pension scheme in Nigeria which was characterized by embezzlement and outright misappropriation of funds (This Day, March 27, 2007). Infact, this is closely linked with the issue as plea bargain where Nigerian would prefer loot the treasure and pay paltry sum of money for his freedom. At his release instead of being call a thief, he is called a chief because his community has honoured him with a chieftaincy title, in the church he is lay-reader because he has donated some of the stolen money to equip the church. He is made an Imam to oversee a local mosque how will the fight succeed.
- e. **Lack of Exemplary Leadership:** This is a central cause of corruption in Nigeria. Lack of exemplary leadership is a problem that has lingered since Nigeria gained independence. Both civilian and military leaders have had selfish motives for their decisions and policies instead of the interest of the nation.

Achebe (1983) expressed:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership... The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility or the challenge of personal example which are hall marks of true leadership.

This assertion reveals that, there is problem of leadership in Nigeria. The successive leaders that have ruled this country lat the will to fight corruption rather they indulged in corrupt practices to better their living at the expense of the poor. Agreed that a country gets the type of leadership it deserves since leaders are chosen or selected among followership, yet in Nigeria's situation leaders are forced, imposed on the people

without their consent. That a good name is better than riches is not in the dictionary of leadership equation in Nigeria. That a leader is a good man means concerning himself and generation yet unborn to the black side of history. Since you are not a chop-I-chop-leader, a name associated with such a leader in the future will mean bad omen.

CORRUPTION AND NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT

Nigeria is plunging deeper into the mire of corruption with each passing year she is one of the most dishonest countries, not just on African continent but on the face of the earth. Affirming this, the Corruption Perception Index, 2010 released by Transparency International notes that, Nigeria has failed to achieve an improvement over last ten years. And when its CPI was released, it revealed that Nigeria came 134th out of 176 countries that were assessed. In 2009, Nigeria came 130th, out of 121st. In 2010, it scored a paltry 2.4 points out of a possible 10 points. Presently, she is rated 152 out of 157 most corrupt countries in the world. The table below captures Nigeria's ranking from 1996 to 2018.

Economically, corruption leads to the depletion of national wealth. Nigeria sits on some of the largest oil reserve in the world, which has been fuelling corruption since independence.

Okechukwu and Inya (2011) observed that between 2000 and 2008 alone, it earned roughly 370 billion United States dollars in oil and gas export. In spite of this, the average life expectancy stands at 48 years and over half of Nigerians do not have access to clean water (UNDP Report 2000, 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2009).

The depletion of national wealth is often responsible for funnelling of scarce public resources to uneconomic high-profile projects, such as dams, power plants, pipeline and refineries etc, at the expense of less spectacular but fundamental infrastructure projects such as schools, hospitals, roads, the supply of power and water to rural and urban areas. Furthermore, it hinders the development of fair market structures and distorts competition, thereby deterring investments. Corruption in Nigeria completely undermined government's socio-economic development strategies. Nonetheless, corruption continues to hamper government's policies and initiatives at development. Nigeria's developmental efforts have been hampered by poor electricity supply. Most industries rely on generating plants as source of power to run their day to day operations. This situation constitutes a major setback to both local and foreign investors who do not see profitable returns on their investment. As a result, successive administrations since the return to civilian rule in 1999 have singled out the power sector for a major reform. The Obasanjo regime (1999-2007) committed huge sums of money (\$16b) to revamp the sector. The Yar'Adua/Goodluck administration thereafter declared a state of emergency in the sub-sector, all with the aim of upgrading and improving electricity supply in the country. But, tried as these successive administrations have, electricity supply in the country continues to suffer. This deteriorating state of the power sector has been attributed to endemic corruption in the sub-sector of the economy.

Corruption has bastardized the power sector. Ideally, with fantastic resources profile and a right type of management team in place, the power sector would have been able to provide good quality and reliable electricity supply to its consumers nationwide. Thus Muttiullah (2010) says; there is a problem of corruption which makes power supply a difficult thing in Nigeria. There are many unresolved problems in Nigeria but the issue of the upsurge of corruption in the power sector is troubling. And the damage it has done to the power supply in Nigeria is astronomical. The menace of corruption leads to epileptic power supply in the country.

There is no gainsaying that corruption bleeds Nigeria economy to the point of collapse, and thus making nonsense of development efforts of successive administration. This is not unexpected, when most of those saddled with the task of piloting the affairs of the country are busy robbing the country blind. The power

sector is even the worst hit. Corruption has frustrated the efforts of government policies at development. Corruption has defied all measures adopted to combat it in Nigeria, apparently, because those waging the corruption-wars are themselves corrupt. Suffice to mention here that most anti-corrupt measures have been met with lip service in Nigeria.

THE WAY FORWARD

The following may help in adding value to the fight against the menace called corruption.

1. Special courts should be established to try corruption cases. This will give speed and quick judgement to corruption cases.
2. Our criminal and penal laws should be reviewed. This is because they were not initially designed to solve the kind of problem we are experiencing in our contemporary society where corruption has become “systemic with the institutionalization of corrupt motivation among various bureaucratic, political and business elite” Ayua (2001).
3. While laws and law enforcement are indispensable, the sustained reduction of systemic corruption requires committed leadership that solves the socio-economic problems of the people and in turn get support from the citizens and the civil society.
4. Honesty and transparency should be publicly rewarded. This will serve as an encouragement to the society and the upcoming generation that it pays to be honest.
5. The family is the micro unit of the society. The message of value reorientation should begin from the family. As the holy books says- train the child the way he should go, so that when he grows he will not depart from it. Parents should endeavour to inculcate in their children and wards the character of honesty, dedication and uprightness.
6. There should be stringent punishment for those convicted of corrupt acts in our law court. Let us take a cue from China where harder punitive measures are placed on convicted criminals.
7. The teaching of moral studies or instruction in all tiers of education in the country should be given a front burner.
8. Finally, there should not be a sacred cow in the administration of justice in corruption related matter.

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