

Leadership, Governance and Corruption in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria gained independence in 1960 from Britain. The political elite who inherited political power have since found that corruption, bad governance and poor leadership only result in underdevelopment and political instability. Corruption and bad governance in the era of military rule has been so bad that the civilian government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (1999 to 2007) attempts to control corruption and demonstrate good leadership has not yielded much desired results. We examine the effect of corruption on governance and leadership in nation building and the instrumentality by which the Obasanjo's government has been trying to curb or eradicate corruption and install good governance/leadership in Nigeria since the return to civil rule.

Fighting corruption at all levels is a priority. Corruption is a serious barrier to effective resource mobilization and allocation, and it diverts resources away from activities that are vital to poverty eradication, economic and sustainable development.¹

Introduction

Independent Nigeria has been grappling with the three-monsters of corruption, bad leadership and bad governance. This situation is not peculiar to Nigeria, but also akin to other less developed countries and even the developed ones. Academic discourse, journals, newspapers, magazines and monographs are full of articles on corruption, governance and leadership. Government departments (both local and international), international financial institutions and supranational political agencies and bodies have taken up the gauntlet through various publications and policy statements denouncing these social evils of corruption, poor leadership and bad government in Africa, particularly Nigeria.

Analysts of different persuasions such as political scientists, sociologists, economists, lawyers, anthropologists, philosophers, organisation theorists, etc, have continued to seek for

concrete way by which the human race can be free of corruption and devoid of poor leadership. Past bitter experiences in Nigeria reveal that, we are yet to learn from the past as the effect of poverty of leadership in government and corruption soar by the day. A recurring issue in Nigeria's political formation in the post-colonial period is the monopolisation of the political field by corrupt, self-conceited leaders.

Despite the torrent of writings, pronouncements, warnings and programmes of action, no particular concrete, positive, effective and continuous *modus operandi* has proved effective enough to combat the scourges of corruption and poor leadership. The inherent ambiguities in Nigerian society largely due to our diverse ethnic plurality and numeric preponderance have no doubt conspired against any meaningful socio-efforts being made in the past and present to tackle corruption. These measures have, indeed, been half-measures and poorly executed. What is still uncertain about these course of actions is whether or not, they are meant to be a stopgap or to create and give the impression that these intractable problems are being adequately resolved by our leaders, whose moral turpitude leaves much to be desired and who have cruelly insulted public confidence.

The severity of corruption and bad governance in Nigeria informs Babafemi Ojuda's assertion that "corruption has become the major export apart from oil".² Successive governments, both civilian and military, have attempted stemming this ugly tide. The recent effort of the present administration is noteworthy. The setting up of specialised anti-crime agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices (And Other Related Offences) Commission (ICPC) and the Code of Conduct Bureau, is basically a step in the right direction.

According to Catan and Chaffin³ "corruption is the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development". Especially in systemic form, corruption decreases public revenue and increase public spending, poverty, inequalities, whilst distorting markets, resource allocations and incentives. These latter effects result in a loss of productive infrastructure investment as funds are diverted to corruption support activities. It creates monopolies that make goods and services more expensive and may put off foreign investors. Tanzi⁴ argues that expenditure on education and health in a corrupt society like Nigeria is reduced since these areas are not easily subject to corrupt practices.

Gray and Kanfmann⁵ note that corruption and lack of economic and public sector reform go hand-in-hand with mutual causality. This explains the high levels of corruption, so detrimental to development, in many less developed countries and consistent with the conclusions of Shleifer and Vishny⁶ that the illegality of corruption and the need for secrecy make it much more distortionary and costly than its sister activity, taxation.

The most damaging effect of corruption on sustainable development if unchecked is that it grows, intensifies and becomes “normalized” and spreads like cancer to vital centers of government with powerful influences on the public ⁷. The normalization of corruption is demoralizing to the honest person who are its victims. It demotivates efficient and talented economic actors and spreads itself through example and by encouraging reciprocity of corruption as common conduct ⁸.

The focus of this work is to examine the effect of corruption, roles of governance and leadership in nation-building. The work is divided into five parts. Part one is the introduction, while part two conceptualized leadership, governance and corruption in details. Part three examine leadership and governance in Nigeria in particular. Part four examine corruption and the Nigerian state and possible solutions to corrupt practices in Nigeria. Part five is the conclusion of the work.

Conceptual Clarification in Theoretical Context on Governance, Leadership and Corruption

Governance

The concept or notion of good governance is traceable to S.P Huntington’s assertion in the late 1970s as the “third wave of democratization”. In the present time, the desire for good governance is unprecedented. The protracted histories of most African countries particularly Nigeria, have been that of brutal authoritarianism, especially military misadventure in politics. With the entrenchment of democracy, the masses have continued to clamour for better living conditions, freedom of expression, justice and equity. Good governance is indeed a by-product of democratic culture, which is rarely experienced in Nigeria. It is therefore, on this premise that various scholars and exponents on governance have articulated divergent views.

John Johnson⁹ employs the reductionism theory in his notion of governance. He reduces governance to efficiency and nationality in allocating resources, curbing corruption which inhibits development and investment, guarantee of civil and human rights and accountability of the people. Richard Joseph on his part, using the reformation approach sees governance as preferred to the arbitrariness of autocratic rule”.¹⁰

The institutional theory is espoused by the Breton Woods Institutions (BWLs) which views good governance as essentially institutional adaptability to achieve the goal of macroeconomic stability in a process, which allows for responsibility to the creditors. This definition, does not meet the expectations of majority of the Nigerian populace, who advocate a government that can deploy the country’s abundant resources to meet basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter approximated as “dividends of democracy”.

Sylvester Odion-Akhaine¹¹, following the footsteps of other scholars such as David Sogge, Patrick Chabal, Martin Doornbos, George Sorensen and Gus Edgreen adopts the latent functionality theory in their various analysis of governance. This is reinforced by their political economy approach on governance. What is common to all these schools is that governance is viewed as an economic parameter requisite for state reform which in turn creates avenue for political and economic development. In his words, Yusuf Bangura opines that “economic reforms cannot be effective in situation where the state is incapable of carrying out its primary role of regulations, mediation and social protection”.¹²

Victor Ukaogo, adopting a neo-liberalist approach, sees governance as essentially tinged on transparency, planning and budgeting. He maintains that the process of budgeting in any country determines the levels of transparency and accountability free from corruption.¹³ Nuhu O. Yaqub and Sulaimon O. Abubakar make a contradistinction between government and governance. In their opinion, governance is broader than government, though they both share some etymological roots. Governance, according to them, can be viewed as the totality of the process of constituting a government as well as administering a political community.¹⁴

Adebayo Ninalowo in the same vein as Nuhu O. Yaqub, identifies the major difference between government and governance. He identifies the salient features of governance such as socio-political empowerment, socio-economic empowerment, legal-rational empowerment, cultural empowerment, gender empowerment, civil-society organisations, etc. He notes that governance is the totality of executive or administrative functions of the state, with a view of fulfilling terms of social contract or constitutional obligations to the citizenry. While government refers to position or office of authority to administer the affairs of the state.¹⁵

Leadership

There have been series and extensive debates on leadership since the idea of organised society came into existence. Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Locke, Marx, Engel, Heidegger, etc have written on the importance of leadership in nation building and development project. Though these scholars advocate various methods in their approach, they are basically concerned with who governs, who should govern and what should constitute political authority in a community, as well as the role and influence of political actors. While Plato and Aristotle adopt the idealist method in their analysis on leadership, Locke and Rousseau rely heavily on the prescriptive method for generalising on the nature of man, society and authority. The work of Marx and Engels rests squarely on historical materialist theory.¹⁶

In simplest term, leadership implies the quality of being good at leading a team, organisation, a country¹⁷, etc. Chuba Okadigbo, views leadership as the process through which one

individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the pursuit of group behaviour. Whereas, political leadership is the decision on social policy and resource allocation as exerted by partisan representatives.¹⁸

Claude Ake's assertion on leadership uncovers the selfish motives of most African leaders. Ake argued that "African leaders place more value on capturing political power for themselves and grow increasingly fearful about what seem to them to be the grave consequences of losing it to their rivals in the competition for control of state power."¹⁹ Femi Pearse takes a cursory look at leadership from political cum moral angle.²⁰ While Ladipo Adamolekun explores leadership in government administration as it relates to politicians, political (technocrats) and higher civil servants.²¹

The basis of these definitions is hinged on the capacity to allocate scarce resource for effective national development. Therefore, the fundamental concept of leadership is also appraisal at the structural and behavioural levels. Dele Seteolu identifies six salient features of leadership with its theoretical underpinnings. These include trait, behaviour, attribution, charismatic, transformational and visionary.²² The trait theory is associated with confidence, iron will, determination and decisiveness. The behavioural theory appraises the conduct specific leaders exhibit such as initiatives, experimentation, generating and implementation of change. The attribution theory depicts the intelligence, personality, oratory virtue and aggressiveness of leaders. The charismatic theory shows leadership features such as self-confidence, vision, articulation, conviction and extraordinary behaviour. The transformational theory is tinged on the charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, vision, pride, respect and thrust. The visionary leadership deals with the ability to explain and strengthen the vision through skillful oral and written communication behaviour.²³

Corruption

Whether distinctly qualified as political, social, judicial, moral, business or bureaucratic, corruption is the most frequently employed word in the whole vocabulary of politics. Corruption is a value-loaded term. It resists easy measurement and simple interpretations. Defining corruption is quite daunting and challenging. It has multiplicity of meanings. Various literatures have demonstrated the different meanings which appeal to different scholars. Therefore, it is useful to examine the roles played by different meanings in the analysis of the phenomenon, corruption.

Broadly speaking, dictionary definitions of corruption reveal three basic attributes of the term

- a. Organic or biological corruption
- b. Moral corruption and
- c. Legal or public office corruption.²⁴

In its organic sense, corruption describes the condemnation and decline of states and misbehaviour of political actors. The biological graphically taints corruption. Corruption here implies to infect, spoil, or make putrid by decay or decomposition. The legal sense relates acts to rules in ways intended to reveal the contravention of specific rules by particular acts. In the moral sense, corruption means to prevent, degrade, ruin and debase integrity, virtue or moral principle. These definitions have some shortcomings. First, the organic definition underestimates the influence and power of analogy in political discourse. The biological concept lays more emphasis on the threat corruption poses to the polity as a whole. The moral view is shallow and views corruption from the moral values standard. Lastly, the legal aspect does not critically regard public opinion about corruption.

Colin Leys's work on corruption titled "What is the problem about corruption?"²⁵ feeds the stream for various postulations on corruption. Most works on corruption have largely been tilted towards Leys' theoretical work. Leys' work on corruption covers the historical, inquisitional and sociological studies. It however, fails to produce a systematic analysis of the phenomenon of corruption. To this end, Wraith and Simpkins (moral definitionists) in their book *Corruption in Developing Countries* with special emphasis on West Africa notes that corruption is a "Scalet thread of binary and corruption which flourishes as luxuriantly as the bush and weeds ... embodies a judge of reposition and temptation which has dangerous and tragic consequences replacing the enthusiasm of the young Africa's civil servant with disenchantment and cynicism".²⁶ Wraith and Simpkins work equally fails to locate the possible economic and political benefits of corruption. The moralists' view on corruption is largely external, not intrinsic to dispute about the nature of corruption.

While Brasz, H. A²⁷, from a sociological point of view, defines corruption as "persuasion of power". Van Doori's notes that corruption is the stealthy exercise of denied power on the basis of the authority inherent in that power ...²⁸ J. S. Nye and N. Leff defined corruption variously. Nye holds that "corruption is behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains, or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private regarding influence."²⁹ Leff views corruption as an extra-legal institution used by individuals or groups to gain influence over the actions of the bureaucracy...³⁰

The complexities associated with providing a meaningful all-embracing definition of the phenomenon corruption continues to generate interests. Medard and Meny succinctly add to the growing list of definitions on corruption. While Medard defines corruption (inclusive of bribery and embezzlement) as the misuse of public office for personal gain and a defining characteristic of African government.³¹ Meny on his part, observes that shifting values have elevated corruption as a critical problem for government on the African continent and they

reflect a crisis in the efficient functioning of the public sector and has become a priority for governments to control.³²

The marked deterioration in the quality of human development and in the standard of living in Africa, particularly Nigeria, is traceable to the interminable phenomenon of corruption. Kryeger and Campos and Edgardo adopt a political economy approach in their analysis of corruption. Their work is basically a revisit of the empirical basis of the theory of rent-seeking society. In this context, Charlick informs that corruption in Africa can be seen as a product of political competition and a drive among politicians to remain in office. The totality of these definitions also found an outlet in Bayart, Ellis and Hibou postulations that "corruption is a malaise that currently afflicts the African state. Governments in Africa have ceased to operate a political entities and become willing participants in a wide range of corrupt and criminal activities".³³

A. A. Adeyemi's contribution is imperative. He regards corruption as an offence, which aims mainly at the conduct of public officials who take advantage of their positions with public administrations for the purpose of private gain.³⁴ However, this definition is quite shallow. The scope of corruption transcends the public sector and in fact extends to the private sector. The various definitions on corruption thus far are merely revisits of Collin Leys's extensive work on corrupt. The analysis on these theories on governance, leadership and corruption shall provide the framework requisite to understanding the fundamentals of the problem of leadership, governance and corruption in Nigeria. The next part examines the prospects of leadership and governance in the Nigerian context.

Leadership and Governance in Nigeria

Since Nigeria attained independence in 1960, the leadership question has become a recurring decimal in the extent literature. The character, quality and nature of our national leaders have been characterized by poor visionary leaders whose interests in state power are inextricably and inexplicable linked with self-conceitedness, personalist peculiarities, parochial cleavages and corrupt tendencies in the management of state affairs. The governing class has been subjected to severe qualification and outright condemnation. The years of failed leadership, in nation building project have continued unabated.

The disillusion of political discontinuities, frequent leadership change, harsh policies, lack of clear-cut ideological base and inherent weak institutional base remain the hallmark of our leadership over the years. The socio-economic fronts have been marred by excessive external debt overhang, disinvestments, food crisis and insecurity, over devalued naira, capital flight, obnoxious and repressive economic policies, deteriorating social infrastructure, stratification, high unemployment and over dependence, irreconcilable spate of homelessness

and underdevelopment. The socio-political domain, has witnessed unprecedented level of kleptocracy, disturbing levels of political corruption, frequent transition crises, politically manipulated electoral process, political instability, weak political institutions and structures.

The intrusion of the military juntas into our polity created contradictions and bastardized the process of leadership in Nigeria. The activities of this military junta almost rend completely the already battered Nigerian state.

Comparative studies of other countries reveal that visionary leaders have played strategic roles in the socio-economic, political and ideological transformation of their countries through converted coherent policies which has transformed their societies. There are well documented literatures on the roles of leaders such as Otto Von Bismarck (Germany), Abraham Lincoln and J. F. Kennedy (USA), Mao Tse Tung (China), De Gaulle (France), John Macdonald and Charles Tupper (Canada), Sir Charles Fitzroy and Charles G. Duffy (Australia), Winston Churchill (Britain), Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam), Stalin and Lenin (Soviet Union), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Abdul Nasser (Egypt), Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), Patrice Lumumba (Congo DR), Ghadafi (Libya), Leopold Senghor (Guinea), etc, who initiated the process of national developments which fundamentally transformed their various countries. Regrettably, same cannot be said of Nigeria. Though leaders such as Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Anthony Enahoro and a host of others, have provided the foundations for astute leadership, consolidating their achievements has remained an Herculean task. Therefore, a historicized analysis of the leadership and governance in Nigeria is imperative.

In pursuit of national unity and development, post independence Nigerian leaders secured political power within the context of peripheralization and dependency. The political, administrative structure was neo-colonial to state the least and was patterned along the British parliamentary system. The administration of policy was regionally structured within the framework of federal system which allowed the regions to pursue policies and programmes hinged on their historical specifics and peculiarities.³⁰ The emerging three regions – North, West and East and their leaders depicted their ethnic origins and ideological industries which informed their political and economic governance that was marred by the incidences of 1962 and 1965 western regional crisis, 1962 and 1963 census crisis and the 1964 General Elections Crisis which culminated in the demise of the First Republic and ushered in protracted years of military misadventure in Nigeria's polity.

The first military intervention in January 1966 and the counter-coup of July of the same year, inauspiciously led to a fratricidal and internecine war in 1967 which lasted until 1970, buttressing the failure of our leaders' inability to dialogue. The subsequent military regimes of Murtala/Obasanjo, Buhari/Idiagbon, Babaginda and Abacha institutionalized the culture of

authoritarianism. Political violence became the instrument of state policy while the militarized state of Nigeria was reinforced by the abysmal military class who controlled the state political apparatus. The policies and programmes of the military class threw the country into decay and stagnation. Besides, there was no vibrant foreign policies clearly fashioned out or articulated by the military ruling junta.

Gowon's administration was fraught with irreconcilable tendencies. His tenure witnessed the reconciliation, revitalization and rehabilitation of the battered Nigerian state as a result of the 30 months civil war which was obviously the most crucial factor that defined national cohesion. Though Gowon's regime coincided with the oil boom, the ruling class was admonished for the uncourtailed corrupt tendencies. The transition programme was largely a procrastination, as no concrete attempts were made to return the nation to a democratically elected government. The formal handover to a civilian government was completed by the Obasanjo regime which attempted a total cleansing of the civil service and paid particular attention to active foreign policy doctrines.

The Buhari regime strategically pursued a strict economic policy aimed at reducing neo-colonial influence. Concerted efforts were made to curtail corruption through the institutionalization of the popular War Against Indiscipline (WAI), which brought some measure of sanity into the nation. However, despite the regimes populist measures, it was severely criticized for its poor human rights record. There were widespread human rights abuses, questionable detention without trial, lack of regard for freedom of speech especially in the media and authoritarian tendencies.

Babangida's economic policy was hinged on the forces of market and the interface of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The regime was, however, criticized for its personalization of state power and the institutionalization of corruption. The \$12.2 billion oil windfall was not accounted for as the Pius Okigbo Report had indicted the Babangida regime. The annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election, obviously showed the contradictions inherent in the Babangida administration which became unpopular for its harsh economic programmes and obnoxious policies. The Babangida regime paid lip service to the programme of transition to civil rule and after the annulment of the 1993 presidential election he was forced to step aside, thus, creating a political vacuum which General Abacha quickly exploited to his advantage when he sacked the Interim Government of Chief Shonekan.

Nigeria under Abacha's rule became a pariah state and was ostracized from the comity of nations. Abacha's profligacy and pretentious leadership was characterized by retrogressive policies and political silencing of opposition through heinous means. Abacha lacked clear-cut economic policies. Attempts at national unity and developments were stifled by declining economic fortunes of the Nigerian state. The progressive political and intellectual class were

viewed with strong aversion by Abacha, who detested public and intellectual forum. Abacha's regime was despotic and totally authoritarian, unrepentantly brutal as he constantly used his military goons to torture, maim, harass, intimidate and possibly assassinate opposition to his government. The Abacha's regime was noted for severe abuses and violation of human rights.

The killing of the Ogoni 9, Ken-Saro Wiwa and eight Ogoni leaders, who had agitated their right through the Movement For the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) amplified Abacha's leadership temerity and brutality. Osaghae succinctly notes that "the Ogoni uprising of the early 1990s was not an isolated phenomenon in the national question debate; but rather, it was part of a wider engagement, a vigorous challenge of the overbearing power of the state by civil society which raised fundamental questions related to the nature of Nigeria's Federalism, resource control and redistribution, as well as moral commitment (or otherwise) of the political class towards nation-building project ... the Ogoni uprising and the repressive response by the Nigerian state, especially in terms of eliminating all forms of opposition clearly revealed that the process of nation building is still a far cry in the agenda of Nigerians autocratic rules."³⁵

The Abdulsalami Abubakar regime was short-lived. It, however, made little inroads by way of providing a strong committed leadership that could meet the exigencies of the Nigerian state. His regime was credited amongst other things for successfully handing over to a "democratically elected" government in 1999.

The present political dispensation under President Obasanjo made great efforts in nation building project. Obasanjo's mode of leadership has been variously criticized by civil society groups, the progressive class, trade unions and other influential parties. Obasanjo's leadership style is linked with his military background and experience. He perceives himself as "all-knowing" and very intolerant, tough, bad-tempered, belligerent and over bearing. His leadership has again been vehemently criticized for national insecurity arising from the outbreak of communal violence in Kaduna, Plateau, Benue States etc, and the agitations of the Sharia, reprisal killings in the southeast as well as the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) and Hausa ethnic clashes.

All these indicate the fragility of our leaders in handling state affairs and threats posed by them to democratic rule. Besides, Obasanjo has shown his insincerity in containing the rising tides of inflation, poverty, collapse of local businesses and infrastructural decay, homelessness and despondency. However, his government has been credited for setting up the anti-corruption commissions such as EFCC and ICPC to combat corruption.

Corruption and the Nigerian State

In Nigeria, corruption has remained a pervasive social phenomenon. It is a universal practice found in all spheres of life. Five major types of corruption are identified: political, economic, bureaucratic, judicial and moral corruption. Corruption is surreptitious in nature and should be identified in terms of ingredients, scope and character. The problem of identification, informs Professor Adeyemi's assertion that "you can only measure what you can express in numbers. Otherwise your knowledge can be conveniently be describe as unsatisfactory".³⁶

Illicit misappropriation of privileges and opportunities in public and private sectors for personal aggrandizement particularly those in position of authority is *sine qua-non* to Nigeria. Both military and civilian governments have plundered the national treasury making the economy unattractive to both local and foreign investors. Today, the economy is bereft of any significant improvement essentially because of a booming capital flight which is a reflection of the pervasive corruption in the polity. Corruption has continued to blossom not because of absence of relevant legislations to tackle the problem, but essentially due to the weakness of key public institutions and lack of political will to enforce the laws.

Nigeria continues to feature prominently amongst the most corrupt nations in the past thirty years. According to a survey result on corruption index, conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Transparency International (IT), Nigeria is constantly listed as one of the five most corrupt countries in the world by these anti-corruption agencies. Nigeria is ranked 1.9 same as Tanzania, only slightly better than Honduras 1.7, Paraguay 1.5 and Cameroon 1.4³⁷, out of possible 10.0 (occupied by Denmark), the world's No. 1 ranked less corrupt country.

Foreign nationals, banking institutions, criminal collaborators and accomplices of government functionaries engaged in corrupt practices. Huge sums of money in various hard currencies such as US dollars, British pounds sterling, German Deutsch Mark, Suisse Franc and French Mark are stashed away in secret international bank accounts in various locations in Europe and the United States of America. The implication of corruption in Nigeria has led to a state of crises of underdevelopment, low technological development, debt peonage, endemic balance of payments crises, decaying infrastructure, decaying cities, continuously deteriorating capacity of managing external and internal conditions, continuous declines in living standards as well as crimes.³⁸ Corruption has equally affected our productive capacity. Not only are we not developing things (industries, infrastructure, utilities etc), we are also not developing people (nutrition, shelter, environment, education, health, etc).

Why Corruption Thrives in Nigeria?

It is widely acknowledged that the past 45 years of Nigeria's existence has essentially been that of wasted development chances. Nigeria is suffering from some deep seated economic problems arising from the pervasive level of corruption. Official corruption and abuse of office are twin monsters widely blamed for Nigeria's long-term economic decaying and under development since independence, specifically since the 1980s up till the present dispensation. While no country in the world is corrupt free. Nigeria has been placed among the most corrupt nations in the world. Several factors have been advanced for the high rate of corruption in Nigeria. Bello Haliru Mohammed identified some of these as negative personal behavioural traits, tribalism, cultural differences or heterogeneity, sectionalism, rapid urbanization, illiteracy, poverty, get rich-quick mania or greed, wrong attitude to public property, undue exposure to foreign influences, ignorance, double standards and low level of patriotism.³⁹

While all the enumerated factors are important, poverty or depreciation in our living standards remains the most crucial factor. Poverty in Nigeria is widespread and all encompassing. Nigeria, which had attained an enviable position as one of the middle-income oil producing countries in the late 1970s and early 1980s slipped gradually to one of the lowest income countries in the early 1990s and 2000s. The United Nations Development Programmes i.e. the UNDP's Human Development Index succinctly place Nigeria in the 151st position based on Human Development Index⁴⁰ recently. Nigeria has consistently over the years, failed to harness its potential to invest in massive flow of oil rents which had accrued to successive governments.

Practical Aspects of Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption is in-exhaustive. The political, judicial, economic, education and business domains are filled with this social malady. However, this part shall cover some aspects of political corruption. Money culture was predominant in post independence Nigeria. The British left behind the parliamentary system of government which the Nigerian political elite could not operate very well soon after independence. Schaffer's pessimism about the British model of government is well documented. He believed that African leaders were not prepared for British parliamentary system and it was indeed a failure.⁴¹ The parliamentary experiment in the First Republic orchestrated corruption in the polity. Top government officials had implicit disregard for public fund. For instance, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe stashed public fund in his own Bank account in the African Continental Bank (ACB). Chief Obafemi Awolowo was also indicted by the Coker Commission of Inquiry into the Western Region Government. Richard Sklar captured the weak moral value of leaders in the First Republic when he alluded to the

sharp financial practices of the Action Group in its relationship with the National Bank in 1962⁴², which the Coker Commission of Inquiry had indicted the A.G leaders for.

The zero-sum approach of politicians and high-level corrupt practices led to the demise of the First Republic. Successive governments of Aguiyi Ironsi and Yakubu Gowon did little to combat corruption. Gowon's government in particular witnessed large-scale corruption, tribalism, and nepotism until it was toppled by Murtala/Obasanjo regime on July 29 1975. The fight against corruption gained public, both local and international recognition. However, Obasanjo was fingered for corrupt practices through the awards of elephant projects contracts such as the 'FESTAC 77' and the N2 billion jumbo loans from the International Financial Corporation (IFC) in 1978. Besides, the Obasanjo regime could not explain the N2 billion (when naira was at its peak) plunder from the state account which was linked with the late dictator Idi-Amin of Uganda.⁴³

Between 1979 and 1983, wide-spread looting and plundering of the national treasury continued unabated under the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) government until it was toppled by the military government of Buhari/Idiagbon which was short-lived (1983-1985). The Babangida regime which had toppled the Buhari/Idiagbon regime was vigorously criticized for the level of unprecedented corruption had assumed. Most prominently, the Pius Okigbo Report indicted Babangida for his inability to account for the \$12.4 billion that had accrued to Nigeria from the Gulf War oil sales.⁴⁴

The periods between 1994 and 1998, remain the most trying periods of military authoritarianism. The Abacha led governments completely emptied the national treasury. The United Nations Industrial Development (UNIDO) maintained that about \$107 billion were kept in private accounts in Europe and the US.⁴⁵ The state of capital flight was unquantifiable. Though some of Abacha's loot has been discovered nothing concrete has been done to judiciously utilize the repatriated loot. The Nigerian economy seemingly ground to a halt as over N400 billion was looted by Abacha and his military goons.

With entrenchment of democracy in 1999, considerable hopes were raised from all quarters. The Obasanjo administration set up anti-corruption commissions to combat the scourge of corruption. The commissions were meant inter alia to survey, investigate and apprehend suspects through the police and prosecute in the law courts. The 1999 Constitution (section 15(5)) amplifies government's resolve to rid the Nigerian society of corruption. Section 15(5) notes that "the state shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power".⁴⁶ By this constitutional provision, the National Assembly in 2000 enacted an act establishing the ICPC under the chairmanship of Justice Akanbi and the EFCC headed by Mallam Nuhu Ribadu.

However, the present civilian administration has been bedeviled by all kinds of social vices particularly perjury and corruption. The most common of these include bribes for budget

approval by the National Assembly, payment of huge sums of money prior to being confirmed as ministerial nominees, by the legislators, classical case of outright embezzlement and looting of public funds and the use of excessive money during election campaigns, etc. The National Assembly has been noted for its corrupt tendencies. The former speaker of the House of Representatives Mr. Buhari, opened up various corrupt activities in the National Assembly. Buhari spent 50 days in office before he was disgraced out for certificate forgery.⁴⁷ Besides, the first Senate President of the 1999 dispensation, Evan Enwerem was an ex-convict and barely spent six months in office before he was impeached.⁴⁸ Late Senator Chuba Okadigbo was found guilty by a seven-man committee chaired by Senator Idris Kuta for frivolously awarding contracts for Christmas gifts up to the tune of N22.9 million. Senator Haruna Abubakar his deputy, was also indicted for his spoils of N16.9 million and an additional N32 million to celebrate Sallah festival.⁴⁹

Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, alleged that prominent senators demanded N54 million from him to guarantee his scaling through the Senate's screening. A litany of allegations and scandals continue to trail the Senate. Below is the list of some of these allegations:

- N850,000 allegedly given to each Senator to vote into office Evan Ewerem as Senate President instead of Chuba Okadigbo (1999).
- N5 million allegedly collected for furniture allowance instead of N3.5 million as the public was made to believe.
- N300,000 kickback allegedly given each senator on supply of vehicles.
- N6 million allegedly cornered by Enwerem on street lighting contract.
- N4 million alleged bribe from the presidency on the floor of the House and N3 million bribe money returned to the Senate by Senator Mamman Ali
- N18million insurance scam involving Senator Haruna Abubakar (Deputy Senate President).
- Allegation by Senator Adthur Nzeribe that each Senator collected N3 million to remove Pius Anyim.
- Anyim allegedly built a N800 million edifice in Abuja and spent N500 million at his mother's burial.
- Sharing of N3 million each to Senators to dump Obsanjo's impeachment motion.
- N60million allegedly collected by Senator Anyim and Mantu to drop impeachment against Obasanjo.
- N22 million allegedly misappropriated by Nzeribe on spurious claims.⁵⁰

The many cases of corruption leveled against the Senate also indicted the fourth Senate President Adolphus Wabara who was removed from office in March 2005 for his involvement in a bribery scandal which engulfed the Senate Education Committee. Professor Fabian Osuji, the then Minister of Education was dismissed by President Obasanjo for having given

N55 million bribe to members of the National Assembly in order to get approval for the inflated budget of his ministry.⁵¹

Monumental corrupt allegations have continued to trail Obasanjo's alleged third term bid. Apologists and coordinators of the third term agenda offered huge sums of money to Senators, members of the House of Representatives and the State Houses of Assembly. The breakdown of this amount shows that N100 million was offered to each of the 109 Senators, N70million for each member of the House of Representatives and N50million for each member of the State Houses of Assembly.⁵²

Over N17.7billion was recovered from the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Tafa Balogun by the EFCC. Balogun was also found to have colluded with several governors and high government functionaries to cover up tracts of serious crimes for instance, Balogun was alleged to have collected N250million from the former Governor of Anambra State, Dr. Mbadinoju to cover up the murder of the former chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association (Anambra State) Mr. Igwe and his wife in September 2002.⁵³ The EFCC has mentioned 24 governors for corruptly enriching themselves with public funds. The most contentious of these were the cases of Plateau and Bayelsa State governors. Governor Joshua Dariye between 2001 and 2005 had looted the states' treasury to the tune of billions of naira. Some of Dariye's loot include N273million, N204million, N6million, N1.16 billion (from the Ecological fund allocated to Plateau State). N176million, N1.18billion, N10m, N25m, N103m, N4.48b (all representing suspicious withdrawals from the Plateaus State Government Accounts with Banks).etc⁵⁴

The arrest of Diepreye Alamieyeseigha the Bayelsa State Governor in London, climaxed the classical cases of treasury looting by government administrators. Alamieyeseigha starved away £1million in his London home. This is in addition to the sum of £420,000 and £470,000 found in different accounts belonging to him as well as asset worth £10million. Alamieyeseigha also diverted public fund to facilitate his acquisition of N1billion shares in Bond Bank Plc and the purchase of Chelsea Hotel Abuja for N2 billion. He had since jumped bail in London and impeached on arrival in Bayelsa State. Two senior officers of the Nigerian Navy, Rear Admiral Francis Agbiti and Real Admiral Samuel Kolawole were convicted over a missing ship MT African Pride in January 2005. N1billion military pension had also been reported missing since 2002. Besides N2.3billion has been reportedly missing from the drug unit of the Nigerian Army Small-Scale Drug Manufacturing Unit.

The persuasive cases of corruption transcend the political domain. The educational and judicial fields have been riddled with corrupt practices. The educational domain has witnessed unprecedented levels of corruption. Salient newspaper headlines have indicted top players in the education sector in scandalous examination malpractices. In the judicial sphere, the words of Justice Mustapha Akanbi former Chairman of ICPC captures the corrupt tendencies

of the judiciary: “Imagine a judge adjourning for a month or three weeks, just to decide whether or not he should take a *motion exparte* or a *motion on notice*”⁵⁵.

The power industry is not spared the rot of corruption despite the Sector Reform Act 2005, which sought to ensure transparency and accountability, the power industry particularly the Power Holding Company of Nigeria’s (PHCN) workers, the middle and lower cadres are corrupt-ridden. A study conducted by the World Bank in 2002, indicted officials of the National Electronic Power Authority (NEPA) of fraudulent practices. Some major firms were reported making payments to encourage NEPA relocate their load-shedding elsewhere.⁵⁶ The general trend is the collection of bribes before an official assignment is carried out. Other institutions such as the Police (noted for its high fraudulent activities), Immigration, Customs and Excise, construction companies, Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL) and other various establishments are all involved in corrupt practice.

Effects of Corruption

Given its prevalence, corruption contributes no positive benefits to economic development, political institutions and social value. Corruption comes in innumerable shapes, forms and sizes. David H. Bayley, in his analysis on the effects of corruption in developing nations, identifies two major effects of corruption as (a) the direct or unmediated effects and (b) the indirect or meditated effects.⁵⁷ Peter Eighers (Chairman, Transparency International) report in 2004 that “corruption leaves ordinary people without essential services, such as life-serving medicine, and deprives them of access to sanitation and housing. In short corruption cost lives”⁵⁸.

Fraudulent acts of corruption and abuse of office have been identified for Nigeria’s long-term economic retrogression and decay. These have fundamentally led to the underdevelopment of the Nigeria state since independence especially from the 1980s. The effect of corruption is too severe in Nigeria. No meaningful development can be alluded to. The Nigeria state has continued to grapple with the lamentable state of infrastructure, mass unemployment, urban vagrancies, homelessness, increased deterioration of the standard of living, regrettable diminished access to good and qualitative necessity of life such as food, good nutrition, health care facilities and educational facilities. Poverty is widespread and crudely exposes our bad economic policies and inefficient leadership structure to utilize resources for development.

Panaceas and Prophylactics for Corruption

Successive governments in Nigeria, have continued to intensify efforts aimed at controlling the hydra-headed monster of corruption. Unfortunately nothing concrete yet has been achieved. Though, the recent efforts of the Obasanjo Government since 1999 are

noteworthy. However, corruption has continued to feature prominently in Nigeria resulting in under-development and stagnation.

Nigeria, has been commended for signing the International Anti-Corruption Treaty at the Convention Conference in Mexico. The Obasanjo government, since 1999, has tried without much success, to recover from the four corners of the globe, billions of public funds, siphoned away by past governments. Besides, the allegation and counter-allegations by the President Obasanjo and his Vice Atiku Abubakar reveal that the basic advocates of the fight against corruption are themselves found to be involved in corrupt practices. Therefore, it would be an exercise in futility to follow the criteria set aside by the ruling class. To this end, the major preoccupation of government is to make the war against corruption very clear. Such rules must not be personalized and selectively applied against opposition, but rather, should be applicable to all and sundry, irrespective of positions, ethnic nationalities or religious affiliations.

To facilitate a corruption-free society the following measures should be strictly adhered to:

- Aggressive public campaign and enlightenment about corruption.
- Financial empowerment of the populace or the masses.
- The two anti-corruption Commissions set up i.e. the ICPC and the EFCC, must be totally independent of the executive and must be given the necessary investigative powers devoid of any external influence.
- Severe sanctions for erring corrupt persons.
- Renewed efforts must be geared toward fiscal stability, managerial efficiency, state capacity and public accountability.
- Correct and appropriate taxation
- Self-discipline and reorientation of the citizens.
- Provision of adequate facilities and infrastructure.
- Creation of employment opportunities for the youths.
- Removal of the immunity clause protecting the President, Vice-President, Governors and Deputy Governors from the Constitution.
- Improved the judiciary and make it more independent.
- Government must ensure that individuals indicted for corrupt practices must not be allowed to hold any public office.
- Effective and efficient police force
- Declaration of assets before taking up and leaving public office.
- The educational sector must play an active and participatory role in inculcating positive values in the citizens.
- Religious bodies must provide the framework for cultivating core values of honesty, integrity, hardwork and moral rectitude required in the fight against corruption.
- Overhaul of the civil service system.

- Societal reforms and incentives for anti-corruption culture such as reward for honesty, transparency, accountability etc.
- Constant publication of names of persons involved in corrupt practices and their prosecution.

This list is by no means exhaustive, but forms a useful part of the measure requisites to curb corruption.

Conclusion

The work has critically analysed corruption and the leadership question in Nigeria. The importance of leadership in enhancing national cohesion, socio-economic transformation and development cannot be overemphasized. Corruption has remained a pathetic cankerworm in Nigeria. A common observable trend is the militarization of the polity by the military class. This, not only intensified economic crises and resource mismanagement, it equally reinforced the existing cleavages in the polity.

The reintroduction of democracy on May 29th 1999, has provided a forum to rehabilitate the state into a viable vehicle for economic development and consolidation of democracy. However, there is an urgent need to build on existing democratic institutions. Though the Obasanjo administration anti-corruption posture is highly commendable, the anti-corruption campaign should be intensified to ensure that corrupt elements are punished accordingly. Dismissal of corrupt government officials and the frequent cabinet reshuffle though symbolic, it does not have the full capacity to stem corruption in the Nigerian polity. The upliftment of social justice, equity, human right, constitutionalism and good governance should be the basic ingridence of the present democratic experience which should transcend ethno-religious cleavages with its attendant capacity to undermine political stability and democracy.

Corruption in Nigeria is largely systematic and systemic. And because it is selfenforcing and amplifying it is very difficult to stop or reverse. The present approach using legal instruments- the EFCC and the ICPC in conjunction with the Code of Conduct Bureau cannot eradicate corruption. For a systematic and systemic corruption to be eradicated, a broad coalition of stakeholders inclusive of governments, civil society, business interests and NGOs must come together to put an end to corruption and its detrimental effects on the Nigerian economy and the populace.

Similarly, there must be an economic for elimination of corruption and this must involved all stakeholders. Stakeholders must be able to weaken the economic factors supporting corrupt practices. This would happen if honest and transparent business men and women and their firms enjoyed business advantages over corrupt ones who give bribes in order to secure

contracts. It is only when this is done that the general public could see that honesty and transparency pays and that could bring more success in the anticorruption crusade in Nigeria.

Governments, NGOs, and business that understand the human development costs of corruption must use their resources to make it unfavourable for firms and individual business men and women to engage in corrupt practices. This can be achieved by creating enforceable system of accountability, underpinned by effective detection both at home(domestically) and abroad (internationally).

Our investigation reveals that corruption takes scarce resources away from the development process and has negative effect on investment and economic growth/development in general. Moreover, corruption harms democracy. Nigeria is trying to build, prevents the equal distribution of services and creates insecurity for all citizens.

Corruption is a symptom of bad governance. Our investigation reveals that corruption causes massive economic and social harm. Money disappears into the wrong pockets or foreign bank accounts, the credibility of the authorities is undermined, investment falls away or is misdirected, and the poorest groups (the talakawa) end up paying the price.

Finally, corruption is a symptoms of bad governance which inturn impedes poverty reduction and sustainable development. For this reason, the fight against corruption must be firmly incorporated into a coherent and realistic development strategy domestically and internationally. Civil society and the media must clamour for and demand anti-corruption performance, measurable result, a better quality of life, especially for the most marginalized and disadvantaged, and most particularly women and children. Civil society and NGOs have an important role to play especially as whistle-blowers and monitors.

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