CORRUPTION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This paper brings to the fore the many faces of corruption as it relates to the devastating impact on Nigeria’s socio-economic development. It highlights the failure of leadership of the political cum military elites. It exposes how corruption has eaten deep into every facet of Nigeria’s life. This paper proffers solutions on how corruption, which has continued to be an impediment to Nigeria’s development, may be reduced, and it will be an addition to the numerous papers advising and proffering solutions on how to tackle corruption.

Keywords: Corruption, Development, Poverty, Military

Introduction

Corruption has been a recurring negative phenomenon in the political, economic and in the over-all national development of the Nigerian state. The organizers of the first military coup of 1966 mentioned it as the main reason for the coup. Before then, in the First Republic (1960 – 66), it was the stock-in-trade of the political elites. From the First Republic to the Second Republic (1979-83) through the Third Republic (1999 to date) many politicians have been indicted and found guilty of different levels of corruption. A good number were sentenced to some outrageous prison terms and their properties confiscated. It is on record that some of our earliest nationalists, founding fathers of this nation who fought the colonialists for Nigeria’s independence were indicted at one time or the other by different tribunals for financial impropriety. The most alarming aspect of the phenomenon called corruption in Nigeria is the level and impunity with which it has grown from the 1960’s First Republic through the military era to the contemporary period.

There are some notable types of corruption, this paper limits itself mainly with “economics and financial corruption”, i.e, official corruption. It is this aspect that has denied Nigeria the resources that could have gone into National development. The Federal Government has over the years demonstrated tremendous and willing resolve to fighting the menace called corruption by enacting numerous anti-corruption laws through legislation. As observers and legal practitioners have pointed out, the problem has never been the lack of enabling laws but in the willingness and determination to prosecute to a conviction. We are not unaware that these laws and legislation are operated and prosecuted by Nigerians who live and operate within the same system that is under discussion and not saints from outer space. Some argue that the laws might be old and might not be perfect but are in operation. These include:

- Recovery of Public Property (Specific Provisions) Act 1983. An act to make provisions for the investigation of assets of any public officer who is alleged to have been engaged in corrupt practices, unjust enrichment of himself or any other person who has abused his office or has in any way breached the code of conduct for public officers contained in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
• Dishonored Cheques Offences Act 1997. An act that makes it an offence for any person or persons anywhere in Nigeria to induce the delivery of any property purported to settle a lawful obligation by means of a cheque which when presented within a reasonable time is dishonored on the grounds that no funds or insufficient funds were standing to the credit of the drawer of the cheque.
• Independent Corrupt Practices & Other Related Offences Commission (I.C.P.C. Law 2000). This is an anti-corruption law 2000 that came into effect on the 13th of June 2000. It was enacted to prohibit and prescribe punishment for corrupt practices and other related offences.
• Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC Act 2004). This Act provides for the establishment of the EFCC, charged with the responsibility of enforcing all economic and crime laws amongst other things in Nigeria.
• Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Act 2005. This is an Act creating offences pertaining to advance fee fraud and other and other related offences, to provide for the arrest and trial of persons who commit such offences and other matters connected.
• Money Laundering Prohibition Act 2011. This very act repealed an earlier one of 2004. It contains provisions for the prohibition of Money Laundering which has also dented Nigeria’s image in the eyes of the international community.

Though these institutions established for the sole purpose of fighting the hydra-headed monster called corruption might be seen to be weak, their establishment and existence give hope that all is not lost yet.

The remaining part of this paper is divided into four parts. The first part examines the conceptual perspective generally. The second part gives the research a theoretical x-ray and understanding of corruption in Nigeria. Thirdly, the paper examines the causes of the phenomenon called corruption, even under the military (1966-79, 1983-1999). The fourth part critically analyzes corruption in the political/civilian era (1979-83, 1999-date). This is the era of stealing with impunity and without conscience. Lastly there is the conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Perspective

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, corruption is defined as dishonesty which encompasses deceitfulness, fraudulence, lying, untruthfulness, treachery and duplicity. Similarly, the World Bank defines the concept as the abuse of public office or trust for private gain (World Bank, 2000). When critically examined, corruption includes giving or taking bribe to circumvent government and public policies and processes to favor a chosen or predetermined participant or outcome.

‘Corruptus’ is a latin word from where the English word ‘corruption’ is derived from. It means to break or destroy. That is to say in other words, corruption means to break away, depart from morality, ethics and virtues. It is therefore normal and acceptable to define a corrupt entity or individual as one that lacks morale, principle, value, goodness, decency, probity, accountability, honesty and integrity. It then follows that a corrupt minded person, is that person that deviates from societal norms and values, those unwritten codes, ethics, conventions, traditions, habits that make a decent and civilized society. Tanzi (2002:25) defines corruption as the abuse of public power for private benefit. Tanzi (2002) also made a distinction between bribes and gifts since most times we seem not able to separate one from the other. Bribes are disguised as gifts. He wrote that usually there is an element of reciprocity in bribery. The Random House Dictionary (1987) defined corruption as the act of corrupting or state of being corrupt”, moral pervasion of integrity, dishonest proceedings, bribery etc.

In its own contribution, the United Nations Organization has this to say of Corruption, “Through experience, observations, information, discussions, reports, newspapers, findings of commissions of inquiry, and of limited socio-scientific studies, one can make an endless descriptive list of instances of corrupt conduct or practices”. In section 2, of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission Act 2000. It is defined to include gratification in return or exchange for undue advantage over other competitors or participants. Bribery, fraud, and similar offences, which means accepting money or any form of favor, theft of state assets and diversion of government revenue and resources into private pockets are amongst the most crippling types of corruption.

Conceptually, as stated above, there are varied and different aspects of corruption that makes it difficult to define rather it is easier and better described (Igwe, 2010: 88). The easiest way to explain the reality of corruption in any society or system is perhaps to study and analyze the degrees of manifestation and recurrences. Corruption attacks the foundation of democratic institutions by distorting electoral processes, perverting the rule of law and creating bureaucratic quagmires whose only reason for existing is soliciting of bribes. Economic development is stunted because
foreign direct investment is discouraged and small businesses within the country often could not overcome the start-up costs required because of corruption. The description above gives a vivid illustration of corruption and its negative impacts on the society and governments of the world. Because of the emphasis given to the fight against corruption globally, the United Nations has declared the 9th day of the month of December as its “International Anti-Corruption Day”.

All member states including Nigeria observe this day yearly. Igwe (2010: 88) opines that corruption occurs in any organized, interdependent system in which parts are either not performing their duties as ethically expected or are performing it abysmally to the detriment of the system’s original intent. Sen (1999) and Atlas (1968) understands it from the sociological viewpoint as the violation of established rules for individual gains and profit. It is a system within a state characterized by bribery, extortion and nepotism. For Kunhiyop (2008: 165) corruption is becoming morally corrupt by indulging in bribery, extortion, fraud, nepotism, outright theft, match-fixing, examination fraud, kickbacks, illegal awarding of contracts etc. On the political turf, corruption occurs in vote rigging, the purchase and sale of votes, and the falsification of election results. All these are rampant and domiciled in Nigeria.

Several authors like Olugbenga (2007), Odofin and Omojuwa (2007), Ajibewa (2006), Faloore (2010), Ig buzor (2008), Egwemi (2012) all identified the concept of corruption as too comprehensive, that it lacks the possibility of a single sentence definition. Also, Andrig and Fjelstad (2001:4) in their study saw corruption as comprising complex and multifaceted phenomenon with multiple causes and effects, as it takes on various forms and contexts. Hon. Justice Mustapha Akanbi, former Chairman ICPC, classified corruption in Nigeria into three categories which includes:

- Street level corruption, which describes corruption in administration as shown in the day to day experiences of citizens in their interactions with officials.
- Business corruption, which occurs among low to medium businesses with or without the active connivance of the equivalent public sector official, and
- High level corruption which involves huge sums of money in high power centres in finance, public service and administration. He added that petty corruption is highly visible, pervasive, endemic and in some cases institutionalized (Akanbi; 2003: 54 cited Johnson, 2007: 248). Justice Akanbi captured it totally as it is because no facet of the nation’s socio-economic, political and cultural sphere is spared by the monster called corruption.

President Muhammadu Buhari himself described corruption in Nigeria as one of the worst cases of human rights violations. You cannot but agree with him on that point when you consider one of the worst corruption cases Nigeria has ever had, “The Pension Scam”. Nigeria is well noted for cheating out the workers who have labored for this country in different capacities in times past. Their pensions are not paid as at when due, many collapse and die while queuing for their pension. The story broke out in the year 2011 on the pages of Daily Sun Newspapers of March 7 and 24 2011 and again on the pages of Daily Trust Newspapers of Thursday 21 of June 2012. It was all about how a syndicate in the pension fund office swindled the government of Nigeria and its pensioners of over Two Hundred and Seventy-three billion naira (#273.9b). In fairness to the authorities this time, the case went for trial and the culprit was jailed for only five (5) years.

Theoretical Framework

It was Thomas Aquinas, a Christian writer who opined that the French word elite depicts elect or chosen to hold power and privileges by divine sanction. Scholars like John Milton, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton are of the opinion that the elites are good guardians, privileged to serve the people better than the people could ever govern themselves. On his part, Robert Michels posited the inevitability of elite domination, referring it to peculiar organizational features of modern politics and governance (Ogbeidi, 2012). This is a theory of state that describes and explains power relationship in contemporary society. It posits that a small minority, consisting of members of the economic elite and policy planning networks hold the most power and that this power is independent of the state’s democratic election process. Aligning this theory to this paper is totally true because when you find yourself in a position of authority, where you can use your office to affect the environment and society at large positively or negatively, you have become an elite. The elites are grouped into two, governing and non-governing elites, according to Vilfredo Pareto cited in Adenuga (2015). This means that elites are there, influencing policies and opinions in organizations and corporations and they are the ones sitting in government too. Corruption has permeated into every strata of our society. The junior clerk in the office, the police man on the street corner, the customs and immigration officer that demands the greasing of their palms before they do their duty are as corrupt as the elite that wields enormous powers. Given that gravity and level of their corruptness might not be the same but they are all corrupt. Corruption is Corruption. It is societal. It was the Indian sage
Mahatma Gandhi that said, “The world says, you have needs, satisfy them, you have as much right as the rich and mighty. Do not hesitate to satisfy your needs, indeed, expand them and demand more.” This is a worldly doctrine.

**Causes of Corruption**

**Poverty:** World Bank researchers have been trying to assess the extent of extreme poverty across the world since 1979 and more systematically since the World Development Report 1990, which introduced the dollar-a-day international poverty line. From the beginning, the idea was to measure income, poverty with respect to a demanding line which, first, reflects the standards of absolute poverty in the world’s poorest countries and, second, correspond it to same real level of well-being in all countries. The first requirement led researchers to anchor the international poverty line on the national poverty lines of very poor developing countries. And the second requirement led them to use Purchasing Power Parity exchange rates (PPPs) – rather than nominal ones - to convert the line into the US dollar and, more importantly, into the currencies of each developing country (World Bank, 1990). But as of today due to inflation all over the developing world, the benchmark has been raised to $1.90. It is assumed that any person earning only the above mentioned sum per month is living under the poverty line. In Nigeria of today, the minimum wage in most states of the federation is between #18,000 naira to #25,000 naira, which at the current exchange rate of about #350 naira - #550 naira to US $1.00 is far below that poverty line. In the year 2015, more than 70% (seventy percent) of Nigerians lived below the poverty line (UNICEF, 2015), and in same line, in the year 2009, more than 90% lived below that poverty level, (USAID, 2009). It then follows that when the elites live and swim in opulence and abundance and the majority wallow in abject poverty, any little indulgence in form of bribery to deviate from the rule and what is acceptable within the society is gladly accepted. In most villages in Nigeria, the rich lives amongst the poor, so take for instance, a poor family living in a dilapidated thatched roofed mud house. This family struggles all their life to train one of their children up-to university level. He finally graduates, luckily gains employment to a government establishment. Of course to the relieved parents they have done their part by giving him education. Now he is working, it is his responsibility to cater for the aged parents and younger siblings. Across the street, opposite them is this mansion with state of the art gadgets, cars of different makes and designs, electricity round the clock, swimming pool, parties and so many things that modern live offer the super-rich. One day somebody offers this poor young graduate a not too clean deal or proposal that is obviously corruption inclined, what do you think, will he accept?, knowing his poor state of affairs, his aged parents, siblings that depend on him for education and sustenance, their poor living condition? Definitely he will accept and who is to blame here - poverty.

**Culture:** The lifestyle of the people helps in fueling corruption. In an ideal situation, a family should comprise father, mother and two or at most four children. So in a situation where you have a family of six, and it’s only one, the father that brings salary home at the end of the month and that salary is below the poverty line. From this below-poverty line salary the family shall feed, clothe, pay school fees, pay medical bills and other utility bills like, electricity, water, telephone bills etc. In most cases there are aged parents of both husband and wife whose pensions don’t come as at when due or are even not pensionable, to be taken care of. More often, there are inherited burdens like, the family of a late brother or sister to be taken care of from that same salary. Anybody that finds himself or herself in this type of situation, of-course cannot meet up with family responsibilities. He will often be ridiculed and mocked at home by wife or wives as the case may be, even by friends and peers. ‘Is it not the same job or work you’re doing that so and so are doing and taking care of his responsibilities’. Comparison sets in and, societal pressure follows. The poor man will then in order to have peace at home and meet up, join the corrupt bandwagon.

**Greed:** The great Indian sage Mahatma Gandhi said this of greed, “Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s needs, but not enough for every man’s greed”. Greed is that inordinate urge of never being satisfied in acquisition and accumulation of material things, power and wealth inclusive. It is what will make a man to tamper with a common wealth left in his trust. He devices and finds dubious means of converting it to his own personal and private use. That is how state resources and funds find their ways into private pockets and accounts abroad. The level of financial greed in Nigeria is so alarming that an elder statesman, Senator Francis Arthur Nzeribe, had this to say - paraphrasing him, said the problem with Nigeria is not the clerk in the office who demands money before your file will be located or the customs officer who demands money to look the other way for a contraband container to pass through the ports (Nzeribe, 1990:109). He accepts those are serious lapses but their effects on the country’s economy are fairly negligible compared to what happens elsewhere in high places. As of the year 1990, a single oil bunkerer was making about US$3m daily and the country was losing at least US$10m daily through the activities of unscrupulous Nigerians in connivance with officials of NNPC (Nzeribe, 1990: 112)
Corruption in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective

Corruption in the Military Era

In January 1966, the Nigerian military made their first incursion into governance and rulership of the nation through staging a coup that overthrew the civilian regime of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Belew, (1960-1966), thereby sacking the first republic. Amongst the cardinal objectives of that coup as explained in the maiden radio broadcast of Major. Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, immediately after the coup,

“The aim of the Revolutionary Council is to establish a strong and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife. Our method of achieving this is strictly military but we have no doubt that every Nigerian will give us maximum cooperation by assisting the regime and not disturbing the peace during the slight changes that are taking place...Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten per cent, those that seek to keep the country divided permanently ...those that have corrupted our society “(Ademoyega, 1981: 123-125).

You can then see why, with the advent of the military into political leadership of the nation, it was thought that corruption had become a thing of the past. The Aguiyi Irons regime (1966), that the military installed did not last long to make an impact before the counter coup of that same year. It was succeeded by the General Yakubu Gowon regime (1966-1975), which prosecuted the civil war (1967-70). During the war, there were serious allegations of financial impropriety against the way and manner weapons (arms) were bought (Soldiers and Oil, 1978). But the real test for the military under Gen. Gowon came in 1974 when the national press went public with stories of corruption in the military under Gen. Gowon. In August of 1974, several affidavits containing detailed allegations of corruption against the governor of Benue-Plateau Joseph Gomwalk, and Joseph Tarka, a member of the Federal Executive Council from the same state with Gowon were published in ‘New Nigeria Newspaper’. This led to the resignation of Joseph Tarka, Gomwalk was exonerated following Gowon’s personal intervention. But the damage has been done, the prestige of the military has been dented. (Soldiers and Oil, Ian Campbell 1981:70).

The army claimed to have intervened to clean the country of corrupt practices but the war into which it led the country had resulted in more corrupt and sharp practices, from arms procurement into all aspects of governance activity and for six years after the war, no attempt was made to arrest this ugly trend. (Soldiers and Oil, M.I. Dent, 1981:109). The Belgore commission was established in 1976 at the inception of the Murtala Mohammed regime to investigate what was then referred to as the ‘Cement Armada’. The commission indicted the Gowon administration for contract inflation in favor of the Ministry of Defence. The commission established that the Ministry of Defence needed only 2.9 million tons of cement at the cost of #52 million naira as against 16 million tons ordered at a cost of #557 million naira. (Afobabi, 1993). In as much as corruption seems to be inherent in the African way of doing things, a colonial government report (CGR) of 1947, says that the African background and outlook on public morality is quite different from that of the present day Briton. The African in the public service seeks to further his own financial interest (Okonkwo, 2007). Before Independence, there has been cases of official misuse of resources for personal enrichment (Storey, 1953). The point being made here is that in as much as the military has always pretended to be corrective and God-sent, Nigeria attained monumental heights of corruption under them.

The Buhari regime (1983-85) that was no respecter of human rights, that sacked the inept civilian elected government of Ahaji Shehu Shagari (1979-1983) and tried to instill discipline and sanity in public life was itself ousted in a bloodless coup by General Ibrahim Babangida on the 27th of August 1985. Babangida’s (1985-1993) 8 year regime made no effort to curb corruption. It reached an alarming rate and became institutionalized by this regime. Offenders who were found guilty by tribunals under Murtala Muhammad and Muhammadu Buhari regimes were pardoned, absorbed back into public life and their seized assets returned to them. According to Maduagwu who wrote on this, “Not only that the regime encouraged corruption by granting pardon to convicted corrupt officials by returning their seized properties, the regime officially sanctioned corruption in the country and made it difficult to apply the only potent measures, long prison terms and seizure of ill-gotten wealth in the future fight against corruption (Maduagwu in Gboyega, 1996:5).

Gen. Ibrahim Babangida reluctantly vacated office in August 1993 in the middle of intense public opposition to his continued stay in office. After a brief stay in power, the Interim National Government, a creation of Babangida was
ousted by Gen. Sani Abacha (1993–1998). Under Gen. Abacha corruption continued unabated. It was a continuation of the deep-seated wicked and evil practices of the Babangida era. The treasury was looted with reckless abandon, without remorse or conscience by Abacha, his family and associates. USD 4billion is the estimated amount of money embezzled and looted from the nation’s treasury by the Abacha family (International Centre for Asset Recovery, 2009). It is said that during Abacha regime (1993–1998), out of the estimated US$3 billion Nigeria earns annually from its oil sales, the Abacha family helped themselves at the rate of between US$0.5 billion and US$1 billion a year for the 4.5 years of Abacha’s rule. (Daniel, “A nation’s Thief”173).

At the demise of Gen. Abacha, Gen. Abubakar (1998–1999) took over the reins of power. He took steps to stop the looting of the treasury by enacting Decree 53. It offered amnesty to public officials coming forward and disclosing information about looted funds and assets and surrendering them, (Tim Daniel, 173). Amongst those who availed themselves of the provisions of this decree 53 are Mohammed Abacha, who disclosed the where-about of US$ 670 million and Bagudu who disclosed the where-about of UK 50 million pounds sterling. Thus it follows that the looting of the nation’s treasury does not depend on status, military, police, politician or civil servant, all it needs is a position of authority and Nigerian citizenship. Looting of the treasury has become a national culture in Nigeria irrespective of the background of whoever is in-charge.

Corruption in the Civilian Era (1960 – 2016)

In as much as corruption in Nigeria does not differentiate based on the type of leadership that is at the helm of affairs, it will be of value to go down the lane of nation’s political history as it relates to our founding fathers in matters concerning corruption. This will confirm that corruption did not just germinate in us, and that it is African that public office is to better the life of the holder (CGR, 1947). For the average Nigerian in position of authority, that position is an avenue to have a share of the national cake, he cannot survive in an atmosphere that is corruption free. (Dele 2014). In the year 1962, Premier of the defunct Western Region, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was investigated and found guilty of corruption by the Coker Commission of Inquiry. In 1954, the Western Region Marketing Board could boast of 6.2 million pounds sterling, however by May, 1962, the corporation had to exist on overdrafts amounting to over 2.5 million pounds sterling. The Commission found Chief Awolowo culpable to the ills of the regional marketing board for failure to adhere to standards of conduct required of persons holding public office, (Coker Commission, 1962).

In 1956, the Forster-Sutton Tribunal of Inquiry investigated the Premier of the defunct Eastern Region, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe for his involvement in the affairs of the defunct African Continental Bank, (ACB). The Tribunal found out that Dr. Azikiwe did not severe his relationship with the bank when he became premier, and that he used his position to influence and promote the bank’s interest. (Report of the Forster-Sutton Inquiry, 1956, Sklar, 2004:185).

Under the Shehu Shagari (1979–1983) regime this trend continued unabated with such alarming gravity, enormity and dimensions. This led to the imprisonment of most of the governors and ministers that served under the President Shehu Shagari regime (1979 – 1983) to outrageous jail terms of minimum of 100 years and maximum of 340 years by the General Muhammadu Buhari (1983–1985) led military government that over-threw the civilian elected government of Shehu Shagari (1979–1983). It was claimed that the nation lost the sum of US$16 billion in oil revenue between 1979 and 1983 during the Shehu Shagari regime (Dash, 1983). Notable amongst the Shagari ministers accused of corruption was his transport minister, Alhaji Umaru Dikko, who allegedly mismanaged #4billion naira of public funds meant for importation of rice (Ogbeidi). Another important figure worth mentioning was the Chairman of the ruling party then, National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Chief Adisa Akinloye, who allegedly ordered special cartons of champagne from France specially made for him on his birthday. In this second coming of Muhammadu Buhari (2015) the nation is being awed by the Sambo Dasuki US$2.1b ‘Dasukigate’ arms scandal. It is alleged that while he was the National Security Adviser (NSA) to the former President of the federation, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, that Sambo Dasuki misappropriated the sum of US$2.1b being the fund released to his office for the purchase of arms, ammunitions and military hardware for the prosecution of the war against Boko Haram (Vanguard, Oct. 21, 2016, Punch, Oct. 26, 2016, Nov 14, 2016, Premium Times Dec.18, 2016, Newsweek Jan 4, 2016). Since then it has been one arrest after the other of all the politicians that had anything to do with the fund.

A few days ago, the press i.e. newspapers, television stations treated Nigerians to a spectacle. Somewhere in Kaduna State of Nigeria in a nondescript building, the sum of USD9.6m was discovered in fire-proof safe. The money belongs to one Mr. Andrew Yakubu, a former Group Managing Director (GMD) of Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Mr. Yakubu could not be bothered with the services of a conventional bank rather he chose to stash his loot in a room where an air-conditioner was permanently switched on. Imagine the amount of infrastructural development that amount of money could have given the rural community where the loot was stashed. Even as this paper is being
concluded, another corruption story that has been going around over the electronic and print media garnered another dimension. The sum of over #15 billion naira in different currencies was found in a private residential apartment at Osborne Towers Ikoyi, a highbrow area of Lagos. The Director of the Nigeria Intelligence Agency (NIA), Ambassador Ayo Oke came forward to claim that the money belongs to his agency and that its for covert operations. Equally in the news is the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, David Babachir Lawal who the Senate had earlier indicted for misconduct. He used his position to award a contract to his own company, to the tune of #200m for the clearing of grasses in Yobe State Internally Displaced Persons camp (IDP). He is the Chairman of the Presidential Initiative on North East (PINE), the agency that awarded the contract. This morning, the Presidency has announced the suspension of both men from office pending the outcome of the report of the committee set up by the President, Muhammad Buhari to investigate the matter.

There was the power sector scam under President Olusegun Obasanjo, in which USD$16b voted for and released for the improvement of electricity supply in the country suddenly grew wings and vanished into the thin air (Vanguard Newspaper, August 14, 2015:1). The House of Representatives set up a committee to unravel what happened. Suddenly, the hunter became the hunted. The members of that committee and their chairman, Mr. Ndudi Elumelu became victims of vicious blackmail attacks that in the end the investigation was abandoned. Under the same Obasanjo, there was the Three Hundred Billion (#300b) approved in the budget and released to the Federal Ministry of Works, then under Chief Tony Anenih as the Minister in charge. Not a single kilometer of road was tarred or maintained from this money. As usual, like all cases of this kind, the money simply disappeared into thin air. All efforts to investigate and find out what happened to the money proved abortive.

Another high profile corruption scandal is the Halliburton bribery case. It was alleged that for the contract of the LNG project at Bonny Island to be awarded several high profile Nigerians serving in and out of government as of the time received various sums of money as bribe to facilitate the award of that contract to the awardee. The contract sum was USD$6b. As of the year 2010, when this scandal blew open, three Nigerian Presidents, a Vice President, a minister, intelligence chiefs and corporate titans were mentioned. The sum of US$182m was allegedly shared among these individuals. (Daniel, 2009). A British lawyer, Jeffrey Tesler who was the go-between in the deal pleaded guilty in a British court. As usual, as with this type of cases in Nigeria, the Nigerian side of the story met a natural death. One would have thought that with President Buhari’s stance against corruption, that he should have the courage to restart investigations into these cases of corruption, but it seems he is shrinking back as far as these cases are concerned. These are really the types of corruption cases that are mind bugling because of the huge sums of money involved and what this could have done in other sectors of the Nigerian political, social, cultural and economic lives and even in the provision of infrastructure.

In 1994, the Okigbo panel report indicted a number of persons including former military President, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, former Head of State Gen. Sani Abacha, a former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria Alhaji Abulkadir Ahmed for mismanaging USD$12.4 billion between 1988 and 1994 (Okigbo, Panel Report, 1994). This shows a continuous trend in looting the national treasury with each new case making a previous one look like a child’s play.

Effects of Corruption

Without doubt the effects of corruption on the socio-political, cultural, economical, and infrastructural development of Nigeria for the period under review has been devastating to say the least. These include but not limited to:

- Corruption has created artificial stock of both local and international debt. These loans were obtained and stolen instead of being used for the original purposes for which they were intentioned.
- Nigeria has been consistently ranked among the failed states of the world. The American magazine Foreign Policy (FP) placed Nigeria on the 14th position out of 20 of the most failed states of the world according to the newspaper “THISDAY” of June 22nd, 2011. This was in its annual Failed States Index (FSI), in which Nigeria has consistently featured in the past few years.
- Nigeria has consistently ranked low in the Mo Ibrahim index of African Governance. This can be seen on the foundation’s website and an abridged version showing Nigeria’s comparative performance can be seen in the newspaper “THISDAY” of October 4th 2010. The scenario has not changed in subsequent years.
- Poor Investment Opportunities; Donor nations and International Conglomerates looking for where to invest their capital outside their home countries shy away from Nigeria because of the level of corruption. This is equally the cause of capital flight from Nigeria, when those companies that are already there can no longer cope, they move to neighboring countries.
High Poverty Level: Level of poverty is high in the country for obvious reasons. Money budgeted for economic development and empowerment of the citizenry is diverted into private pockets and bank accounts abroad. The citizens are left impoverished. Even when poverty alleviation programs are initiated, the funds for it end up in private accounts here and overseas.

Nigeria has been consistently rated low by Transparency International since 2007, (Uzochukwu 2017), though this may not be counted as an effect of corruption but Nigeria consistently appears in this unholy list because the system is totally corrupt. Speaking of ratings, the UNDP human development report/ index for 2017 has just been published. Nigeria because of corruption and poor human and infrastructural development found itself at no.152, out of 188 nations that took part. Smaller and less prosperous nations around Nigeria performed much more better, (UNDP, hdi, 2017).

Poor Infrastructural Development: The bane of any nation saddled with corruption is poor infrastructural/ national development. Hospitals are non-existent, where they exist, they are not stocked with medicine and medical facilities, there are no qualified personnel. Nigerians now engage in medical tourism more than any other nationals worldwide. In this 21st century, in some parts of Nigeria, there is no pipe-born water for drinking. People resort to drinking whatever water they see thereby increasing and spreading diseases. Motor-able tarred roads are non-existent in most urban and rural areas of the country. Electricity that is the main ingredient of industrialization is still non-existent in some parts of the country, most factories and industries resort to running generator sets thereby increasing the cost of production and cost of their final products in the market. Lack of funding has reduced our universities to less than secondary schools. Nigerian universities that ranked very high in the sixties now has deteriorated to the level that our students are found all over the world in some funny and less acceptable universities. A four year course in a Nigerian university now takes eight years to finish because most of the time lecturers are on strike because money budgeted for education has grown wings and vanished.

Underdevelopment: In all the nations like Nigeria where corruption has become the norm in the government, one thing that is glaring clear, is national underdevelopment. No one genuinely wants to occupy an office because of what he or she wants to contribute to national development. Their primary aim, interest is how they can better their own life through the office they are called to serve. Budgets for their offices disappear unceremoniously without trace. With such mindset and trends the nation will remain underdeveloped unless something drastic is done.

Insecurity: Security is one, if not the primary responsibility of any nation to its citizens, but when the money budgeted for it cannot be accounted for, no jobs for the university graduates, pensioners not paid, universities on strike most of the academic year. That is the reason for armed robbery, kidnappings, ritual killings and so many other vices that are on the increase.

Conclusion

There is overwhelming evidence that despite being naturally endowed with abundant natural and human resources, corruption has reduced Nigeria to a state of hopelessness. With more than five decades since the colonial masters left the shores of Nigeria, the country is yet to find its feet and bearing in the area of governance and accountability to its citizens. Despite the huge resources flowing into its treasury from the sale of crude oil, more than ninety percent of the population survives below the poverty margin. It is evident that with responsible management and accountability in governance, the monster called corruption will be reduced drastically. The leaders must lead a transparent life-style for their followers to see and emulate. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) must come up with a national program to re-orientate Nigerians on the evils, and away from corruption. A subject that will highlight the evils of this demon to the society should be introduced to the education curricula starting from crèche or kindergarten. The purpose is to teach, recover and rescue the future generation of this nation from corruption since almost everyone above the age of ten in Nigeria has corruption flowing in their blood. The present generation owes it as a duty to cleanse out corruption from Nigeria before handing it over to the future generation. All the agencies established to fight corruption should be strengthened and given more powers, and the government must stop interfering with their work. The government should desist from using them as agencies of witch-hunt. One cannot but agree with Robert Klitgaard who opines in his book ‘Controlling Corruption’, that, ‘like illness, corruption will always be with us, but that this sad fact does not keep us from attempting to reduce the disease, neither should it paralyze efforts to reduce corruption’(1988.7).

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