

**EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION ON NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA  
FROM 1999 – 2015**

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**Abstract**

*The growing frequency of the twin evils of corruption and insecurity in Nigeria in spite of efforts made by successive governments with the sole purpose of mitigating their negative consequences have been one of the major issues of public concern. This study adopts secondary data and content analysis to examine the effect of corruption on national security in Nigeria. The study reveals that all efforts to establish a just and efficient society have been frustrated by corruption, manifested by depreciation of human dignity and collapse of infrastructures, inequality, poverty and injustice as a result of systematic elite misappropriation of state power, primitive accumulation of wealth, ethno-cultural intolerance and political manipulation in the society which exists in every aspect of our society. Corruption in Nigeria is attributed to failure of governance to achieve the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended; The study also revealed that there exist a correlation between corruption and insecurity in Nigeria and that greed by insurgent groups and corruption by public officials caused deprivation, alienation, conflict and insecurity in Nigeria. The study recommends for improvement in the quality of governance in order to reduce the incidence of corruption and insecurity in Nigeria; the aim of this paper is to examine the effects corruption on national security in Nigeria from 1999 – 2015.*

**Key Words:** Assessment, corruption, effect, national security

## Introduction

Corruption is an act which diverges from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private motives such as wealth, power or position while security is more concerned with safety of lives and property. In Nigeria, high levels of crime and insecurity have made life unbearable especially in the case of Boko Haram which led to the displacement of many as internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in dilapidated and isolated areas or informal settlements and are subjected to all forms of suffering; Nigeria is embroiled in deep security quagmire with particular reference to insurgency, kidnapping and abduction for ransom, farmers/ Fulani clashes, the age long ethnic conflict between Tiv and Jukunin the Benue and Taraba axis, occultist appraisals, etc. The issues of corruption and national security are indeed matter of urgent concern in Nigeria; the problem has undermined the country's national security which indeed can be seen as a major concern for national survival, national self-defense, the safeguarding of government's sovereignty or even the broader focus on social justice and the realization of peace and progress for the Nigerian society. It is against this background that this paper examines the effects of corruption on national security in Nigeria. The study is relatively different from the previous studies on the issue of corruption and national security as it attempt to examine the current effects and tolls corruption and insecurity have on the socio – economic lives of Nigerian citizens. The outcome of the study showed that in - spite of efforts by successive administrations to curb the menace of corruption, it seems to defy solutions, thereby exacerbating insecurity which is a major threat to life and property of the citizens; which ultimately, tends to undermine the corporate existence and socio – economic development of the country; the irony of it all is that, the more government is fighting corruption, the more corruption is fighting back. Therefore there is the need to conduct another study to ensure that corruption is eliminated in the Nigerian society

## Methodology

The methods used for this study were descriptive analysis – qualitative and quantitative through primary sources such as personal experiences, information obtained from both formal and informal discussions with friends, colleagues and some members of the public – both men and women ; secondary sources by reviewing the existing literature on corruption and national security by reading text books , journals , academic magazines, conferences, seminars and workshop papers, internet resources; data was analyzed and presented using content analysis and descriptive technique.

## Conceptualization of Corruption and National Security

### Corruption

Like most concepts in the social sciences, corruption does not have a universal definition, Ofoeze (2004:20) sees corruption as referring to “any action or inaction of any person, or group either public or private, intentionally perpetrated to secure advantages for oneself, a relation or associates in a manner that detracted from the

accepted regulations, morals, and/or ethical standards; hence, a mockery of justice, equity and fair play”, it is an “effort to secure wealth or power through illegal means, private gain at public expense, or misuse of public power for private benefit” (Lipset& Lenz, 2000:112). The former Vice President of U.S.A, Al Gore held that corruption is a serious crime with devastating consequence; he says it is “a cold vicious, often violent sacrifice of citizens' security for a narrow, greedy, private, personal profit by a crooked official” (Zhang 1996 in Tony, 2008:40); corruption as a multi-faceted phenomenon that ranges from the giving and accepting of bribe to other kinds of fraudulent practices ICPC Act (2000:25). Corruption is an act which is contrary to the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private motives such as wealth, power or status (Khan, 1996). Black and Garner (2000) perceived corruption as an official or fiduciary person who unlawfully or wrongfully uses his status or character to procure some benefit for himself or for another person, contrary to duty and rights of others, they further posited that corruption covers any illegal use of power by any person(s) for personal or arbitrary purposes.

Toyo (2006:2) said, corruption “consist of depravity, venality or peculation in playing a social role “and that the act normally involves some kind of cover up or diversionary conduct such as falsification, hypocrisy, tyranny, violence, torment or property. Beside operationalizing corruption, Otite ( 2006 ) went on to say that the concept is fostered by a particular economic system of which capitalism is noted for its acquisitive philosophy and emphasis on individualism; He insist that Nigeria as a peripheral capitalist country is immersed in corruption; the logical implication of Toyo (2006) postulation is that the inequalities in socio-economic status of the income of the higher and lower income earners in the country is an added impetus for corruption where most civil servants are paid starvation wages, as in Nigeria, it can also serve as a stimulus to bribe taking in order to keep up with the joneses. It is thus not surprising that in-spite of measures put in place to check-mate the scourge of corruption such as oath system for public official and the code of conduct statue enshrined in the 1999 constitution, corruption has continued unabated. Corruption occurs in many forms and it has contributed immensely to the impoverishment and misery of a large segment of the Nigerian masses. It is the misappropriation of government property or revenues made possible through government regulations Braguinsky, (1996). Otite (2006) states that corruption is the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favor or moral depravity. It takes place when two parties have interacted to change the structure or process of society or the behavior of functionaries in order to produce dishonest, unfaithful or undefined situations. Corruption transcends bribery but includes treasury looting and the deliberate bending of rules of the system to favour friends or hurt foes.

unwavering rate of the twin evils of corruption and insecurity in Nigeria pose a great threat to governance and have become issues of public concern. In spite of all efforts, corruption is still manifested in different sectors of governance in Nigeria. For

instance, with the return to democratic governance to Nigeria in 1999 and establishment of many anti-corruption agencies Shehu (2011) citing a research conducted by the Human Rights Watch in 2007 estimated that during the eight year period of Obasanjo Administration, Nigeria lost between US\$4 billion and US\$8 billion annually to corruption. Between 2005 and 2007 alone, state Governors and politicians, allegedly embezzled US\$250 billion hidden in Western banks and other offshore financial centers (Shehu, 2011).

The alarming rate of insecurity in Nigeria is very disturbing in spite of the reforms undertaken and substantial share of national budgets allocated to the security sector. There have been serious and continuous threats to national and individual security in the form of organized crimes, election related violence, oil bunkering kidnapping; incidences of armed robbery, car snatching and ritual killings, violent extremism like the terrifying insurgence by the deadly “Boko-Haram” in the North-East Nigeria Shehu, (2011), herdsmen and farmers clashes, cattle rustling and banditry, kidnapping and abduction, etc.

### **Security and Insecurity**

Security could take different forms; there is human security, national security, and so on. National security implies the appropriation and deployment of state security apparatus - use of coercive force to deal with circumstances of crisis, whether internally or internationally, human security involves protecting the citizenry from hunger, disease, poverty, unemployment, natural disasters, etc. however, all these can only take place where there is peace and stability in the polity (Ighodalo, 2012:169). According to the United Nation Development programme (1994), human security could be defined as protection from hidden and hurtful disruption in the daily activities either at homes, offices or communities; security is the state of being safe and secure from danger, it could also be protection from persistent threat such as hunger, diseases and repression. Nwagboso (2012) cited in Agbekaka et al (2016:294) argues that security is commonly associated with the alleviation of threat to the survival of individuals or groups, it can be equated with freedom from present and future danger, harm or anxiety. In countries where appropriate development standards are practiced, the citizenry enjoys high standard of living demonstrated by the willingness of government to provide the basic necessities of life in terms of jobs, portable water, electricity, affordable housing, foods, roads among others. Where there is security, there is likely to be absence of fear, threat, anxiety, tension and apprehension over loss of life, liberty, property, goals and values, among others (Ighodolo, 2012:165).

The concept of security connotes prioritizing the provision of goods and services which make life more meaningful to the people and empower them to participate in the developmental processes which is more enduring aspect of national security where people go about their daily activities unhindered. The more fundamental basis for security lies in freedom from poverty, disease, ignorance, joblessness, arbitrary power (Ibeanu, 1999) because human security represents the most effective instrument for national security and not the building of arms and weapons

of warfare. Ighodalo (2012:164) argued that “one of the principal functions of the modern state is that of protecting the territorial integrity of the state, life and property of its citizenry and improving the human condition. The promotion of human security has become the central focus of the new development efforts because building of arms and ammunitions do not bring peace, security and political stability. Eradicating poverty, hunger, diseases through sustainable develop programmes, hold the key to an enduring national security”.

Insecurity is a state of being subject to danger or threat; insecurity is the antithesis of security Agbekaku et al., ( 2016:295 ); some of the common descriptions of insecurity include: lack of safety, danger, hazard, uncertainty; lack to confidence; doubtful; unguarded or unprotected; lacking stability; trouble just to mention few. Insecurity which refers to a state of vulnerability to harm and loss of life, property or livelihood could also be seen as “the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection, it is a state inadequate freedom from danger.’ Igbodalo (2012: 169) argued that ‘insecurity in a given state not only affect the growth and survival of democracy but also lead to high level of poverty, unemployment, high rate of crimes, poor standard of living, high rate of illiteracy, poor infrastructural development, poor state of health facilities among others’. More than ever before, the country's security has come under threat; indeed, the climate of fear pervades the entire country as politics of impunity has continued to hound the polity. Never before has the country's security situation been so overwhelmed than now. Yet, the threat to national security is not unconnected with prevalence of corruption and injustices which dominate the body polity of the Nigerian society.

#### **Impact of Insecurity on People's Lives**

To have a good understanding of what insecurity is, it is important to know what security is all about. Although, the provision of security to the lives and property of the citizenry is the primary purpose of the state (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1997) security is difficult to define with accuracy. Zebadi (2007) observes that the concept of security has always been associated with the safety and survival of the state and its citizens from harm or destruction; security is not limited to the preparedness of the defense and security forces, while considering the safety of the citizens by the state, Fayeye (2007) asserts that security of a nation requires moving away from the traditional militaristic and state – centric definition of security towards human security, he believes that security encompasses the personal and communal state of being secured from a wide range of critical and pervasive threats. Nnoli (2006) sees national security as a cherished value associated with physical safety of individuals, groups and nation states; it can be measured by the absence of fear that threat, anxiety or danger will occur; it is thus, physical and psychological, objective and subjective as well as multi-dimensional; social, economic, political and environmental (Zebadi, 2007). The Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2009 & 2011) offers an operational definition of security at individual and national levels. At the level of an individual, security encompasses safety from domestic political persecution, social unrest and safety of the person; at the national level, security means safety from cross-border

tensions, government involvement in armed conflict and the extent of domestic armed conflict and is concerned with the number of political refugees and internally displaced people. From the foregoing definitions, insecurity denotes prevalence of physical and or potential threat of fear, anxiety or danger detrimental to the safety and survival of individuals, groups and the state at large. This can be economic, social, political and environmental.

The causes of insecurity are varied and may include the proliferation of arms from war-tone countries, local manufacturers and multi-national corporations Bujra (2004) identified that the multi-ethnic character of most African states makes conflict a tool for politicization of ethnicity, the distortion in the political economy and the activities of international arms merchants, competition for scarce resources such as the extraction of oil and the resultant environmental degradation. The poor people most often perceives that insecurity and instability affect them either through crime and violence, conflict, or through unresponsive, corrupt and abusive security actors. For example, insecurity and injustice contribute to gender-based discrimination and social exclusion, unequal access to assets, and discriminatory social norms and power structures [Narayan et al., \(2000\)](#); [DFID, \(2007\)](#). Deficit in safety and security contributes to both poverty and underdevelopment ([Ismail and Hendrickson, 2009](#)). Conversely, the presence of safety, security can contribute to development efforts 'with high levels of security leading to development and development further promotes security' ([Stewart, 2004, pp. 278-279](#)); safety and security are seen as **moral rights and intrinsic to development** ([Roseveare, 2013](#)). Access to justice or legal empowerment programmes make a strong case that insecurity and injustice are part of poverty, increasing the vulnerability of communities and reinforcing local power structures ([Cox, 2008](#)) and ultimately, impact on human well-being through 'entitlement failures', individual or household command over resources, and extreme human suffering results when this falls below what is needed for subsistence.

### **Insecurity, Economic Growth and Development**

There is a strong relationship between safety, security and development against economic costs of crime and violence ([Cox, 2008](#); [Denney, 2013](#)). According to Cox, the causal links between crime and development demonstrates how crime diverts financial, physical, social and human capital from households and businesses. Violent conflict contributes to insecurity and can affect economic growth. [Stewart \(2004, p.264\)](#) finds that insecurity represented by the presence of conflict, affects economic behaviour by:

- Reducing economic growth, with conflict-affected economies growing 1-2 per cent slower on average than peacetime economies.
- Lowering exports, resulting from falls in production and a shift towards domestic markets.
- Lowering consumption per head.
- Increasing the share of government expenditure to the military and lowering

the share of social expenditure.

Violent conflict can also destroy infrastructure and assets, undermine investment and can contribute to unemployment; it increases the costs of doing business by reducing the incentives for international or local investment in physical or human capital [DFID, \(2007\)](#); [Garrasi et al., \(2009\)](#), lack of safety, security and justice impedes people's access to, other services such as education, health, water, sanitation and electricity ([OECD-DAC, 2007a](#)).Shivit B. (2014),&Huma H. (2016); ultimately because of insecurity, many people run away from their homes ,ending up becoming internally displaced persons ( IDPs) or refugees.

### **Effects of Corruption on National Security in Nigeria**

While the link between corruption, economic and social development and the issues of security has been debated for a long time, the discussion about the effect of corruption on the stability or vulnerability of states is a recent development especially with respect to the challenging state of insecurity in Nigeria; the security architecture has been undermined completely by corruption: if we take national security as the protection of national survival, then it may either be seen as the desire and capacity for national self-defense Ray, (1987:248-249) or the preservation of the borders of a state and the power to maintain a government's sovereignty within its territory Goldstein, (1999:79), it is the confrontation of threats to peace in the society (Hare, 1973:86-89) or the avoidance of conflicts and the preservation of the lives of people in the society Africa Research Bulletin, (2000:13931 -55).

The defence sector often provides a fertile ground for corrupt activities due to a culture of secrecy and impunity that shields it from rigorous scrutiny thereby corrodes efficiency and effectiveness of the armed forces; lowers troop morale and inadequate equipment contribute to higher casualties on the field which can compromise broader national security. Corruption negatively impacts the armed forces credibility in both national and international engagements; the main areas affected by corruption in defence and security are: personnel and manpower management; budgeting and financial management, procurement, offset arrangements; utilization of surplus equipment and infrastructure; military operations, and the involvement of defence personnel and assets in economic activities Răzvan Hoinaru, *etal* (2019). Transparency International (TI) identifies a political dimension of the security sector that is prone to corruption, these are security policies; the nexus between defence and national assets; control of intelligence services and other planning and policy procedures, such as a National Security Strategy, can potentially become a source for corruption when conducted with no regard to legal boundaries. Corruption affects all levels of security and defense personnel and can take the form of theft, extortion, bribery, and influence networks, lack of transparency, lack of oversight mechanisms and absence of adequate rules and regulations. Resources provided through corrupt practices are often transformed into economic and political influence, thus weakening democratic institutions and further expanding corruption.

### **The Importance of Safety and Security**

The World Bank's Voices of the Poor report (a survey of poor people in 23 low and middle-income countries conducted over a period of years; [Narayan et al., 2000](#)), show that safety, security and justice are major concerns for citizens. Safety and security represent many things like stable income, consistent housing, clothing, and food supplies as part of daily life, protection from crime, and psychological security; safety, security and justice are priorities for poor people and are associated with development, including the prevention of violent conflict, Security tends to enhance development, peace, stability and democratic governance, which are beneficial to the economic and security interests that are reflective of the peoples' values Adesoji Adeniyi(2015.The World Bank Development Report 2011 highlights that strengthening legitimate institutions and governance to provide security, justice, and jobs is crucial in breaking cycles of violence ([WB, 2011](#)). Econometric evidence on violence and development suggests that 'the correlations between insecurity and underdevelopment are much stronger than correlations between peace and development' ([Denney, 2013, p.3](#)) and factors perceived as entrenching peace, such as good governance, transparency, accountability and strong state-society relations, 'are not linked to stronger development result in the same way the absence of violence is'; Security and justice provision is related to protection from human rights abuses, the ability for citizens to seek redress and hold providers accountable ([OECD-DAC, 2007a](#)). Security and justice institutions that are democratically controlled, alongside an independent judiciary that can check the power of the legislature and executive, including security institutions, contributes to the establishment of the rule of law. The equitable provision of safety, security and justice to all citizens is important for legitimacy and effectiveness ([DFID, 2007](#)). It helps build the confidence needed to overcome societal mistrust in violence-affected societies because creating trust and providing services in local communities contributes to 'virtuous cycles' of institutional transformation and national developmental progress ([WB, 2011](#)).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper employs "functionalist theory" for the topic under discourse; the functionalist perspective was based on the works of Herbert Spenser, Emile DurKheim, Talcot Parson and Robert Merton, the theory posited that the society is a system of interconnected parts that work together in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social equilibrium of the whole, anything that happens to any aspect of the system will invariably affect the entire system. The functionalist explanation have been one of the dominant theoretical approach to the study of corruption; it emphasized that corruption provides the process by which members of any given society could evade or manipulate the political and economic system which is unable to strive or coop with the demands made upon it; therefore it could render the system unworkable or cannot function without the existence of corruption. Functionalist approach sees corruption as emanating from the social structure of the society, which exerts a definite pressure upon certain individuals in the society to engage in non-



conforming conduct. Merton (1957) stressed that a society in which there is an exceptionally strong emphasis upon specific goals without corresponding institutional procedures, will inevitably leads to what Durkerm called norm less or deviation. Corruption as a social phenomenon has serious implications for Nigeria, one of which is that it breeds insecurity in Nigeria. There seems to be a strong correlation between issues of corruption and insecure livelihood. It is a phenomenon that cuts across classes of people and across the region; the main concern of the perspective is the interaction of its components (parts) and the functional integration of its components (parts) and the functional integration of the system made possible by the interdependence of the parts. Scholars like (Ering, Otu and Archibong, 2014; . (2007) and Ering, Nwagbara and Ushie, 2006), have argued that poverty breeds insecurity, bringing to the fore the cancerous effects of corruption in Nigeria Ottong (1986) has maintained that corruption is inevitable in society. He argued that it is the natural desire in man for favour on the one hand, and appreciation on the other hand, that has encouraged various forms of gratification which has escalated into bribery and corruption. The other dimension, see poverty as a consequent of corruption in the society. In other words, poverty might contribute to corruption, but it is observed that in Nigeria as in other societies, it is not only those who are poor that are involved in bribery and corruption, corruption has no respect for class nor is it limited to the poor or the rich.

The functionality of corruption in Nigeria and as discussed above, is manifested in many areas of the social system with devastating consequences on the society which invariably leads to various forms such as embezzlement of public fund, offering and acceptance of bribe, electoral rigging, examination malpractice, drug abuse (Agbonifo,1985), extortion, cheating, covetousness, nepotism, favoritism, Godfatherism, clientelism,etc. (emphasis mine). Hence, the functionalist theoretical approach best explains the effects of the phenomenon corruption in relation to Nigerian national security as exemplified by the above discourse.

### **Findings of the Study**

The study above indicates the rate of corruption and insecurity is very high in Nigeria from 1999 to -2015; the high level of corruption in Nigeria is one of the factors responsible for the high level of insecurity in the country; corruption by public servant are responsible for the grievances expressed by the citizens includes deprivation and alienation, the twin problems of corruption and insecurity in Nigeria can be blamed on government failure to comply with the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy as contained in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999. The root causes of corruption in Nigeria include ineffective accountability frameworks, non-transparency in governance, poor public sector wages and weak and non-enforcement of penalties for corruption offences, despite our experimentation with various political government institutions and anti-corruption campaigns, none has succeeded in reducing let alone eliminate corruption form today's politics.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing discussion on the assessment of the effects of corruption and insecurity in Nigeria, it is clear that fifty five year after independence, insecurity continues to pose serious challenges to Nigeria. At the root of this is corruption which has generated unimaginable level of poverty, crime and by extension insecurity. Socially, corruption and insecurity has done more damage to the country's image globally than any other phenomenon. Corruption and insecurity are therefore twin problem of development in Nigeria and need to be eliminated for Nigeria to be able to effectively play its role among the committee of nations. Eradicating corruption and insecurity from Nigeria is a task that should not be left to the government alone, all hands must be on deck if the country is to be purged of this twin evil. Government needs to tackle the problem of poverty, hunger, unemployment and social injustice to reduce the high rate of insecurity; this write-up assessed the effects of corruption on national security in Nigeria, it is noticed that corruption in Nigeria weakened the country's national and human security that is most often than not seen as the concern for national survival, national self-defense, the preservation of government's sovereignty and peace and wellbeing of the citizens. The vitiation of national security in Nigeria has been linked to the dismal lack of vision, poor managerial ability, and the lack of moral integrity of erstwhile regimes in Nigeria; it becomes clear, how the national and human security of a country can be threatened by an economic crisis triggered by corruption among public officials, leading to governments poor resource management ability. To remove these cancerous cells, Nigerians have to come to terms with the fact that a surgical operation is badly needed to take back the country from clutches of corruption in order to improve the security of lives and properties of the Nigerian Citizens. This paper proposes the following recommendations to policy makers and all stake holders in the Nigerian project for prompt action towards salvation from political, economic, social, security and other vices bred by corruption. There is the need for the reform of the electoral system for more credible elections and responsible representation at the various levels of government. There is the need for government to implement the freedom of Information Act and strengthen the civil society for more transparency and accountability in governance. There government must enforce penalties deterrent enough to reduce incentives for corruption. There must be a balance between human personal responsibilities and the broader political concern for the public interest as the basis of social existence in Nigeria. There must strong whistle blowers policy to play a crucial role in signaling infractions because it will enhance some preventive effect. The entire machinery of government should be reformed which should include increase in public sector wages so that workers will not have appetite for corruption.

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