

Political Corruption And The Challenges of Development
in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Abstract

The paper dwells on relationship between political leadership and development effort in Nigeria. While leadership had played tremendous role in the socio-economic and political development of the regions and climes, the reverse is the case in Nigeria, despite the re-enactment of democracy in 1999. The study identifies social vices that account for the protected state of Nigeria's quest for development since independence, which has made her to lose tract in an attempt to achieve national development. The political climate characterized with ethnicity, mediocrity, partisanship, corrupted process of recruitment of leadership among others have been responsible for show pace of national development. The paper adopts secondary method of data collection to achieve this. The study concludes by advocating for good governance in order to overcome the challenges of development in Nigeria.

Key words: political leadership, corruption, underdevelopment, leadership.

Introduction

According to Omotoye (2015) the concept of "corruption", "leadership", "development" have attained important usage in the lexicon of third world countries of the world – situated mainly in Africa, Asia and Latin America. They have become important concepts that tend to explain how some countries of the world, through constituted authorities are utilizing the resources at their disposal to attain their desired societal ends and booster the capacity of citizens, while also attempting to overcome structural obstacles to such desirable ends. Nigeria with its vast endowment of human and natural resources feature prominently in this list. Following the attainment of political independence in October 1960, the country exuded bright prospect of development potentials that could lead Africa nay the newly decolonized nations, on the path of socio-economic and materials wellbeing of the citizens. Despite the huge promises of development capability and an enormous availability of resources, the Nigerian economy has witnessed a period of stagnant economy growth (Omotoye, 2015).

According to Ogbeidi (2012) this has been partly blame on corruption and gross mismanagement of the country's vast resources. The country has witnessed a depletion of its resources for private benefit, buttressed by unmitigated levels of personal aggrandizement and self-glorification on the part of leaders at various levels. It begs the question, that despite her position as number eight in the list of countries that export crude oil into the international market, more than 70 to 75% of the Nigerian population are still classified as poor.

Indeed, it is a paradox that Nigeria, the world's eighth largest export of crude oil, a country endowed with many resources, still has more than 70 to 75 percent of its population living below the poverty line as a result of corruption and economic mismanagement. Pathetically, the logic of the Nigerian political leadership class has been that of self-service as some of the leaders are mired in the pursuit of selfish and personal goals at the expense of broader national interest. Consequently, emphasis has been on personal aggrandizement and self-glorification with the result that corruption has become a euphemism for explaining political leadership in Nigeria in relation to the management of national wealth.

History has shown that no nation of the world grew and enjoyed steady development in virtually all spheres of its national life without experiencing good and selfless political leadership. This is largely because qualitative growth and development has always been an outcome of good governance. Commenting on the experience of the Nigerian nation, the renowned novelist, Chinua Achebe, insisted that the root cause of the Nigeria predicament should be laid squarely at the foot of bad leadership. "The trouble with Nigeria", Achebe argued,

...it is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian Character, there is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land, climate, water, air, or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibilities, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership. Achebe, 1984: (as cited in Ogbeyidi, 2012).

Conceptualization:

Leadership

Leadership has been defined in so many ways that it is hard to come with a single working definition. However, leadership may be defined as a body of people who lead and direct the activities of a group towards achieving a goal. It also denote the ability to lead, direct and organize a group. Leadership can also be seen as the process of influencing the activities and behaviors of an individual or group effort towards achieving a set goal. It is also concerned with the implementation of those policies and decisions which assist in directing the activities of an organization towards its specific goals.

Political Class

Political class are the group of individuals responsible for running the affairs of the Government. The political class consist of the persons occupying positions of public service in the Federal, State, and Local Government like President, governors, local government chairmen and ward councilors. Secondly, they consist of the executive and legislative branches of government (members of the senate, federal and state house of representative). Lastly, they comprise of members of political parties that present candidates to contest for political positions in an election with the view of becoming the ruling party and in the event of defeat, serve as lively opposition to the ruling party.

"This power when accrued is then utilized for the dual purpose of illegal enrichment of self and cronies and oppression of their proletarian countrymen even beyond that of our erstwhile colonial masters. The impoverished masses are only remembered during election period when they are bribed with petty gifts of cash and kind not only to sell their votes to the highest bidder, but also enact acts of intimidation, violence and hooliganism against political opponents. They are a brood of vipers continually spreading the venom of ethnic, religious and political discrimination wherever it suits their interest instead of attempting to foster peace in a highly diverse nation. The antics enacted by members of the Nigerian political class have led to the common saying in Nigeria "politics is a dirty game". Corruption has succeeded to be a way life in Nigeria through our political leaders. <http://www.nairaland.com/2899379/nigerian-political-class-citizens-quest>.

The ruling class that bears the responsibility of managing the affairs and resources of a political entity by setting and influencing policy priorities affecting the territory through different decision making structure and institutions created for the orderly development of the country. It could also be described as the human element that operates the machineries of government on behalf of an organized territory.

Underdevelopment

The history of Nigeria development crisis started from colonial period as many scholars are of the opinion that African predicament can only be attributed to colonialism and base on comparative standards, Africa today is underdeveloped in relation to western Europe and a few other parts of the world; and that the present position has been arrived at, not by the separate evolution of Africa on the one hand and Europe on the other (Rodney; 1983 cited in Shola, 2015).

The term underdevelopment refers to that state of an economy where levels of living of masses are extremely low due to very level of per capital income resulting from low level of productivity and high rates of population. Some of the basic characteristics of underdeveloped countries includes low per

capital income, low level of living rate of population growth, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, predominant of subsistent agriculture in the economy, misdistribution of wealth and assets among others.

Umez (2000), in an insightful and captivating work provides useful insight for understanding the crisis of development in Africa using Nigeria as a case study. Umez argues that Nigerians have contributed more to her problem of underdevelopment than any other people. Furthermore, he also present four perspectives which he believes offers more fundamental and compressive explanations of the problems of development in Nigeria (Umez, 2000).

Omotola (2001), assert that since independent in 1960, Nigeria has very huge resources endowed with both human and materials, the country has not only failed to actualize its potentials, but also appears to have effectively squandered its opportunities for greatness. The quest for stability and development is, without doubt, the Holy Grail for many third world countries, a never ending, tedious, yet elusive, search for that condition under which these countries would be able to develop institutions and structures with the capacity to ensure economic growth, equitable distribution of national wealth, political stability and accountability (Omotola, 2001 as cited in Olarinwaju, 2015).

Reasons Why Nigeria Is Still Underdeveloped

There are many reasons why Nigeria is still referred to as third world country in spite of her abundant natural and human resources. These includes: corruption, lack of security, over-dependent on oil (mono-economic factor), poor leadership and neglect of education that has led to fallen standard of education.

Problem of leadership

Nigeria has ever been faced with the problem of leadership; this has left the country crawling on her knees in spite of the resources. Jago (1982) asserts that Nigeria has witnessed several transitions of governments with one regime leaving one problem or another that have dragged the country ever since independence; the military especially did more damage in terms of leadership than any one even though the fourth republic is ongoing and we virtually don't understand what is hidden in the bag for Nigerians. Good leaders are made not born. If you have the desire and willpower, you can become an effective leader. Good leaders develop through never ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience (Jago, 1982). Nigeria needs good and effective leaders to function and to move forward; the leadership determines lots of things in terms of progress. The failure of Nigerian leaders to establish good government, has cripple the nation development.

Corruption

Just like the leadership problem, corruption has eating deep in to the marrows of nation economy and has affected the development of Nigeria in totality.

Pervasive impact of fraud has been described as the greatest factor engendering and perpetuating underdevelopment in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general.

Education and poverty

Development is measured with some yardstick known as economy indices, when these indices don't measure up to standard, then there is problem. Poverty is then one of the indices and it has been measured that an average Nigerian live below average (earn and spend less than a dollar a day). Education on the other hand contribute significantly to development but the failure of our leaders to effectively monitor and maintain education in the country has led to fallen standard of education in Nigeria. (Robert D. 2012).

Mono-culture Economic System:

A country operating a mono-cultural economy may be poor. Nigeria since early 1970's have moved away from agriculture to the production of crude oil, commodity whose price can only be determined by foreign countries. Price mechanism has no direct control of the production and distribution of crude oil. According to Asemota, (1999): "The oil sector which is dominated by the government is in a state of decay due to poor operating conditions and inadequate funding, vandalization and bureaucratic

interventions. Public originations in Nigeria enjoy monopoly status that hamper development rather than fostering it”.

Western education is over hundred and fifty years old in Nigeria. Despite this, some socio-cultural factors still hinders our economic development, causing poverty. Some Nigerians still believe that their economic capacity and security can only be guaranteed by having more male and a large number of children. As long as we continue to have more children without a corresponding increase in food production, our poverty level will continue to be on an increase. A man's production of children above his income, will increase poverty level, from increased number of illiterates and criminal rates in the country.

Corruption

Corruption is a word that has been defined differently by both practitioners and academicians who study it, depending largely on the individual's cultural background, discipline and political learning. However, the word corruption may be used to explain acts that mean abuse of public office for private gain (Dahida and Akangbe, 2013). Sometimes corruption is understood as something against law, such as a contract by which the borrower agreed to pay the Leander usurious interest. It is said, in such case, that it was corruptly agreed.

Corruption is usually understood as involving some “corrupted” politicians and public administrators. Corruption is when a civil servant, official, bureaucrat or politician (anyone elected or appointed to a position of public authority, with power to allocate public resources in the name of the state or the government) is abusing this official position for personal or group gain. The corrupt act is when this person demands or accepts money or some other form of reward, for himself or for his family, friends and allies.

The corruption perception Index (CPI) released annually by Transparency International has consistently listed Nigeria among the most corrupt nations of the world. The 1996 study of corruption by Transparency International and Goetting University ranked Nigeria as the most corrupt nation, among 54 nations listed in the study. The 1998 Transparency International Corruption perception Index (CPI) ranked Nigeria as the fifth most corrupt nation out of 85 countries listed in the rating (The Transparency International Corruption index, 1998). The 2001 Corruption perception index rated Nigeria second most corrupt nation among 91 countries listed (The Transparency International Corruption Index, 2001). The 2002 Corruption perception Index ranked Nigeria third most corrupt 21 nation out of the 102 countries listed (The Transparency International Corruption Index, 2002).

, the 2003 Corruption Perception Index also rated the country as the second most corrupt nation out of 133 countries listed (The Transparency International Corruption Index, 2003). Although the trend improved a little from the 2005 Corruption Perception Index rating, Nigeria still languishes within the first ten most corrupt nation of the world.

There is no debating the fact that one of the major factor impeding Nigeria's development today is corruption. Nigeria suffers from acute pneumonia of corruption. Monies allotted for infrastructural development, provision of social amenities; hospitals, schools, roads, housing, electricity among other needs of life are siphoned, pocketed or diverted by certain element at the detriment of the masses.

Causes of Corruption in Nigeria

According to Omotoye, (2015), the following are the causes of corruption

Lack of patriotism: Many of Nigerian politicians and “big” business men and women are not bothered about the future of the nation. They are self-centered and interested in personal achievement.

In some cases, unemployment of the youths is a cause for corruption The
Nigerian society value money more than morality

The lackadaisical attitude of the government to corruption. Many corrupt officers were set free, even after they were found guilty of corruption.

Abject poverty as a result of the socio-economic problems in the country.

Solution

In other to curb corruption the following solutions were also proffered by Omotoye (2005)

The government should empower the EFCC and ICPC to carry out their investigation without interference.

Hard work should be recognized and rewarded.

The press should be able to expose corrupt practices whenever they are found in the society.

Leadership at every unit or level of government should lead by example

The teaching of moral education or religious knowledge should be emphasized in all schools (primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions).

Government should also enforce equality before the law and ensure that appropriate sanctions are meted out to offenders.

Political Corruption and Underdevelopment

According to Ribadu (2007), without doubt, the unpardonable failure of the political leadership class managing the affairs and wealth of the country had inevitably brought severe misery to many voiceless and helpless Nigerians. It must also be mentioned here that Nigeria's post -independence political bureaucratic and military elites had terribly pillaged the nation's common wealth and national patrimony with impunity, thereby denying Nigerians access to economic prosperity and quality living condition.

According to Ngwube and Okoli (2013) corruption leads to the use of resources to finance elephant projects at the expenses of infrastructural development such as schools, hospitals, roads, water supply and electricity supply. Osoba (1996) as cited in Alemika, (2012) posits that financial corruption dent a nation's capacity to provide basic necessity of life for the nation. Political corruption is the main factor responsible for Nigeria underdevelopment in all sectors Egharevba and Chiazor, (2012), "this is significantly so because the greatest challenge to Nigeria's development are Nigerians themselves as represented by the political leaders who should be held responsible for the present pathetic state of underdevelopment in the country" (Falola, 2005).

Corruption is a cankerworm that requires urgent solution or better still there is need for the government to declare a state of emergency. It has eaten deep into the fabrics of our affairs, most of leaders find it difficult to wage a war against corruption. In 2015 Dasuki arms scandal of about 13.6 billion is a vivid example, money meant for arms procurement were diverted to other means, should we call it a jamboree or father Christmas, many lives were lost on a daily basis, military were not well equipped and the so called our leaders will be telling outside world that they are fighting insurgency, this shows that we only have leaders who are more interested in their pockets and not the interest of the people. Our so-call leaders see politics as a means of amassing wealth and total freedom from poverty, a quick means to get rich syndrome. (www.premiumtimesng.com/.../195173-court-papers-show-how-ex-nsa-das-...)

More so, the former Minister of Aviation Stella Oduah in July 3, 2016 was said to have lute about 2.5 billion Naira which was found in the account of her housemaid the account was in operation without the knowledge of the housemaid of former Aviation Minister. It was discovered that the Minister must have stolen about 5.6 billion Naira during her minister ship. It was reported by Shara Reporter pay for two BMW cars at 1.6 million dollars or 800,000 apiece. (www.Saharareports.com/.../efcc-finds-n-25b-fomer-aviation-minister-stella-odu-...)

In September 15, 2016 - 31.4 million dollars scandal with Nigeria's ex-first lady shows the scandal of Buhari's anti-corruption battle. Patience Jonathan, the colorful wife of Nigeria's ex-president, Goodluck Jonathan, has become the latest high profile Nigerian embroiled in a corruption -related scandal. EFCC has frozen first lady accounts containing 31.4 million dollars controlled by the former first lady who claims of the money was for payment of medical bills. All these corrupt practices and many orders has affected the development of the nation. (<https://qz.com/.../a-31-million-scandal-with-nigerians-ex-first-lady-shows-the-...>)

Conclusion

It is observed that corruption has become an impediment for the nation's growth and development. It is found in almost all spheres of life in Nigeria. There is a need for honesty, patriotism and sincere "Change" of every individual for a better attitude of life. The "Change" concept should start from those in government to the common man on the street. The leadership of the country should lead by good example. The government should provide employment and the necessary enabling environment for the people, most especially, stable electricity, pipe-borne water and other social amenities. If corruption is minimized to the barest level, there will be a tremendous improvement in the body polity and socio-economic life of Nigerians. Corruption hinders development and economic growth. It increases poverty and dent the image of a country. The total eradication of corruption in Nigeria should involve everybody and not only the government. For Nigeria to move forward and for the citizens to benefit from the democratic dividends a national awareness campaign is necessary to let Nigerians know the implications of corruption on the economy. Furthermore, the government should take the gain strict to lead by example by inculcating good governance, transparency, accountability in order for Nigerians to have hope in the democratic governance.

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