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# **CORRUPTION AND THE CRISIS OF DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Corruption has become so endemic and phenomenal in Nigeria that it is now possible to talk of the political culture of corruption. It is such that even in comparative ranking Nigeria has always ranked among the league of the five most corrupt countries and at times topping the list. Apart from the fact that it retards investment and economic growth, the problem of corruption has far reaching destructive impacts on Nigeria's political system. It is also antithetical to democratic consolidation. Indeed, corruption can distort the entire decision-making process on investment, projects and other commercial transaction, and the very social and political fabrics of society. This paper attempts to highlight effects of past corrupt leaders of Nigeria on the national development of the country.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Recently, scholars and international development organizations have focused on the threat of corruption to economic growth and development particularly in developing countries (World Bank 1997, Mauro, 1995; 1997; Onu, 2003; Rose Ackerman and Andrew, 1996). Though, corruption is a universal phenomenon, it is however, of special concern in development countries reasons being that the phenomenon of corruption has become so academic that is now systemic such that one can begin to talk about the political culture of corruption.

In such a situation as rightly posited by Rose-Ackerman (1997:35), "even countries with extensive natural resources may fail to develop in a way that benefits ordinary citizens".

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*Corruption And The Crisis Of Development In Nigeria.*

Though formulated within a generalized context, this observation aptly captures the Nigerian situation. Above all, corruption leads to higher cost or costly public investment, lower government revenue, lower expenditure on operations and maintenance, lower quality of public infrastructure and invariably contradicting development.

**THE CONCEPT OF CORRUPTION**

The concept of corruption like any other concepts in social sciences does not lend itself to easy definition. No commonly accepted definitions of corruption exist; most definitions despite the basic difference share certain element. Corruption had been defined in various societies mostly in line with culture or prescribed social life of the people. While some societies speak of corruption mainly in terms of illegal acquisition of material things, other tends to stretch it further by bringing special and moral values under it (Amao, 2003:3). Roberts, (1957:227) Nkom, (1982:6) opined that "corruption is the perversion of public affairs for private advantage" Nkom goes further to assert that:

Corruption includes bribery or the use of unauthorized reward to influence people in position of authority either to act or not to act in ways beneficial to the private advantages of the giver and then that of the receiver the misappropriation of public funds and resources to private gains, nepotism, etc.

Barongu, (1983:160) Andreski, (1968) define corruption "as the practice of using the power of office for making private gain in breach of laws and regulation nominally in force". They stressed further that corruption is less pronounced in societies where there is little wealth in the areas of larger wealth, higher trade volumes or more officials etc. They concluded that corruption is higher in the African West Coast than in the East and Central Africa.

Moreover, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary conceptualize corruption as "dishonest or wicked behaviour especially how people with authority and power willing to act dishonestly or illegally in return for money in personal or when people acted not following accepted standard of behaviour in society.

Senturia sees it "as the misuse of public power for private gains" Alatas characterized corruption' as the absence of trust for the sake of private benefits.

According to Ninsin (2000:450) corruption connotes "any form of behavior that generate private selfserving gains which are not sanctioned by law, or the prevailing norms of society. "It is, according to Ottite (1986:12), the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favour or moral depravity... when two parties have interacted to change the structure or the processes of society or the behavior of functionaries in order to produce dishonest unfaithful or defiled situation. We can say that corruption has taken place".

In the words of Amao (2003:11), "corruption is the abuse of office for private gains". To Gboyega (1996:6), corruption implies "any decision act or conduct that subsets the integrity of peoples in authority or institutions charged with promoting defending or

sustaining democratization process, thereby undermining its effectiveness in performing its assigned roles". Going by these definitions, it becomes obvious that corruption is not a one man affair, but by something that it involves at least two parties. Similarly, it entails the perversion of societal values for personal benefit. This explains why it is a social problem, affecting more than one person, even if it is one person that commits it. (Ekanem, 2003).

#### MANIFESTATION OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Since the introduction of sharp practices by colonialism into the political economy of Nigeria, the phenomenon of corruption has continued to escalate in a dastardly manner. It has grown to become a phenomenal such that we can now talk of the political culture of corruption in Nigeria. It is so pervasive that no regime can be totally exonerated. Rather, it would seem that its scope, depth, and sophistication have increased with successive regimes.

Although it is as old as the country itself, corruption became a serious issue with the oil boom of the 1970s. The oil boom era, according to Ologbenla (1998:31), "raised the stakes for the control of power at the centre, and corruption, in the guise of populist economic policies, became an implicit instrument of personal political agenda." The situation became worse under Shahu Shagari's administration when corruption was let loose upon the entire system in an unprecedented rate. During the period, prebendalism, in addition to social closure, became the order of the day. It is instructive to note that a prebendal system, according to Joseph (1987: 90-92), is not only one in which the offices of the state are allocated and then exploited benefits by the office holder, but also one where such a practice is legitimated by a set of political norms according to which the appropriation of such offices is not just an act of individual greed to ambition but concurrently the satisfaction of the short term objectives of a subset of the general population. **Prebendalism** is a term used to describe patron-clientelism or neopatrimonialism in Nigeria. Since then the term has commonly been used in scholarly literature and textbooks. (Amao 2003:15) The Catholic Encyclopedia defines a prebend as the "right of member of chapter to his share in the revenues of a cathedral." Joseph used the term to describe the sense of entitlement that many people in Nigeria feel they have to the revenues of the Nigerian state. Elected official, government workers, and members of the ethnic and religious groups to which they belong feel they have a right to a share of government revenues. Joseph (1996:1) "According to the theory of prebendalism, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by officeholders, *who use* them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups"

With the abrupt end of Shagari's regime and return of the country to military dictatorship in December 31, 1983, the military government threatened to deal decisively with the phenomenon of corruption. This was however not to last long because of the outing of the regime from power via a counter coup in 1985. Thus corruption once again returned full scaled.

Under the Babangida, Abacha and Abdulsalam regimes, the system was not only

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*Corruption And The Crisis Of Development In Nigeria.*

prebendal, but also praetorian. A praetorian system is one that is corrupt and an unstable regime of coups, cliques and conspiracies tempered only by occasional political dictatorship (Adekanye, 1993:41). Its major features according to him include indiscipline, mercenaries, self seeking, greed and avarice, sale of public office and prebendalism. Praetorianism is therefore the military equivalent of the corrupt society (Adekanye, 1993:41).

The handing over of power to a democratically elected government headed by President Olusegun Obasanjo in May 1999 heralded new hopes that a new dawn had arrived. Such optimism is not misplaced given the strong words with which the president expressed his resolve to tackle the problem of corruption in a very decisive way, such that "there would be no business as usual" (Obasanjo, 1999). This rationalization informed the speed with which the regime initiated and got approval for the corrupt practices and other related offences acts, 2000 (Yaqub, 2003: 185 2007).

Be that as it may, the incident of corruption has not abated under the fledging fourth republic. Rather, it has soared and assumed the dimension of a scourge as no arm and level of government is left out.

In an insightful piece, Ojo (2003:301 304) has graphically illustrated the Wanton manifestation of corruption in the nascent democracy. These include the issue of falsification of age and academic qualification by Salisu Buhari, the first speaker of the House of representative, under the fourth republic.

Diepreye Alamieyeseigha was detained in London on charges of money laundering in September 2005. At the time of his arrest, Metropolitan police found about £1m in cash in his London home. Later they found a total of £1.8m (\$3.2m) in cash and bank accounts. He has been found to own real estate in London worth an alleged £10 million. His state's monthly federal allocation for the last six years has been in the order of £32 million. He jumped bail in December 2005 from the United Kingdom by allegedly disguising himself as a woman, though Alamieyeseigha denies this claim (Amao, 2003:20). On July 26, 2007, Alamieyeseigha pled guilty before a Nigerian court to six charges and was sentenced to two years in prison on each charge; however, because the sentences were set to run concurrently and the time was counted from the point of his arrest nearly two years before the sentences, his actual sentence was relatively short. Many of his assets were ordered to be forfeited to the Bayelsa state government. According to Alamieyeseigha, he only pled guilty due to his age and would have fought the charges had he been younger. On July 27, just hours after being taken to prison, he was released due to time already served.

In April 2009, Alamieyeseigha pledged a donation of 3,000,000 Naira to the Akassa Development Foundation (Amao, 2003:21). In December 2009, the federal government hired a British law firm to help dispose of four expensive properties acquired by Alamieyeseigha in London. Alamieyeseigha had bought one of these properties for £1,750,000.00 in July 2003, paying in cash. Diepreye Solomon Peter Alamieyeseigha used it as his London residence, and as the registered office of Solomon and Peters Inc.

On June 28, 2012, the United States (US) Department of Justice (DoJ) announced that it had executed an asset forfeiture order on \$401,931 in a Massachusetts brokerage fund, traceable to Alamieyeseigha. US prosecutors filed court papers in April 2011 targeting the

Massachusetts brokerage fund and a \$600,000 Maryland home, which they alleged were the proceeds of corruption. A motion for default judgement and civil forfeiture was granted by a Massachusetts federal district judge in early June 2012. The forfeiture order was the first to be made under the DOJ's fledgling Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative.

Financial recklessness on the part of Senator Chuba Okadigbo as senate president. In short, the legislative house is almost synonymous with impropriety and corruption. The executive arm has not been different in any way. It is even the worse for it because it has direct access to and controls the nation's treasury. At the state and local government levels, the governing style has been said to "engender so much cynicism that the federal government is being warned that this may be a particular different front for the war against corruption" (cf Ojo, 2003: 303).

Giving the context of the foregoing, it may be correct to assert that corruption has not only become phenomenal in Nigeria, but also become endemic. If fact, it has become part and parcel of the ways of life with serious implications for the state and society. What could these implications be? The most prominent of them is the crisis of development it has engendered in Nigeria. Regarded as the most endowed black nation on earth, with the abundance of both natural and human resources that are of high quality, the Nigeria situation in terms of development is deplorable.

Available statistics show that poverty rule is at all times high, standing today at 67%. The capacity utilization of the industrial sector is less than encouraging (CBN, 2001, 2002): In short the economy is in shamble, with little or no sign of recovery.

In terms of freedom, capacity expansion and popular participation, effort at ensuring them seem pretentious. For instance, the registration of more political parties, poverty eradication programme, upward review of worker's salary etc. would appear to be geared towards expanding the political space to enhance the freedom and expand the capacity of individuals thereby promoting popular participations in the governance of the country. However, the subsequent events such as the party governance have shown the limits of such efforts. Besides, the intended consequences of such policies have tended to ambush and materialize their intended gains (Omotola, 2003: 12 -15).

The import of the foregoing is that corruption has brought about a serious distortion in the political economy of Nigeria. The distortion takes a number of forms, the principal one being the perversion of the concept of good governance which pertains to the exercise of political power in the management of a nation's affairs. The management should be effective, efficient and in response to critical needs of society.

These are attainable where there are public participation, accountability and transparency. It is characterized by participatory activities, sustainability, legitimacy and

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acceptability to the people, promotion of equity and equality, promotion of gender balance, toleration of opposition, strengthening of indigenous mechanism, operate by rule of law, regulatory rather than controlling; and service oriented (Cf, Azeez 2002: 339-41). But because of corruption, these manifest in their negative formation in Nigeria.

As posited by Diamond (1991:66) "Corruption distorts the character of political competition". As such, "the premium in acquiring political office has become high enough to justify any degree of rigging, bribery, thuggery or political chicanery." By the same token, Ake (1982) has established a causal link between corruption and military involvement in politics. He blamed the over valuing of political power struggle associated with it, not rich according to him, paths results from the privatization of the public realm where everything including government and its coercive institutions has been privatized. The effect is that everyone now left to himself and survival depends on the power accumulated by the individuals (see also Ekeh, 1975, 1980).

No doubt, the phenomenon of corruption has really engendered the privatization of the Nigeria state. A privatized state is essentially a predatory state. And as articulated by Holsh (2000: 251), a state can be said to be predatory when "it is driven by ethnic and regional competition for the bounties of the state". It involves a personality regime ruling through coercion, material inducement and personality politics, tending to degrade the institutional foundations of the economy and state. In the circumstance, elites extract immediate rents and transfer rather than providing incentives for economic growth. In some predatory states like Nigeria, the ruling elites and their clients "use their positions access to resources to plunder the national economy through graft, corruption, and extortion and to participate in private business activities" (Holsh, 2000:251).

Consequently, the state is "appropriated to service the private interests by the dominant function of the elite" (Ake, 1996:42). To that extent people use funds at the disposal of the state for systemic corruption, from petty survival venality at the lower echelons of government to kleptocracy at the top (Nafziger, 2003:2).

The privatization of the Nigerian state has served to compound its already weak and precarious political economy which it inherited from colonialism. In the quest to attenuate the effects of this, the state became subjected to extensive rent seeking, that is "an omnipresent policy to obtain private benefit from public action and resources" (Seevayryneri, 2000: 440). Although, this has produced negative consequences such as stagnation and decline in the economy, resulting in a further pauperization of the masses, it has also created some form of benefit for the society at all times. That is the ruling elites and their allies. For, as rightly pointed out by Nafziger, (2003:2):

*These elites may not benefit from avoiding political decay through, nurturing free entry and the rule of law and reducing corruption and*

*exploitation. Instead, political leaders may gain more from extensive unproductive, profit seeking activities in a political system they control than from long term efforts to build a well functioning state in which economic progress and democratic institution, flourish.*

The above observation readily captures the Nigeria Situation and illustrates very graphically why successive effort at check mating corruption in Nigeria has been largely unproductive. Beginning from the 1979 constitutional provisions for the establishment of a code of conduct bureau and tribunal, and its eventual inauguration by the Shagari's regime; followed by the Special Tribunal (Miscellaneous Offences) Decree no. 20 of 1984 and War Against Indiscipline of the Buhari/Idiagbon regime, to the Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Recovery (MAMSER, and National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) of the Babangida regime, War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC) and National Orientation Agency (NOA) of the Abacha regime, to the latest Corrupt Practice, and other Related Offences Act, 2000 and Economic and Financial Crime that is; ICPC and EFCC of Obasanjo administration.

Nigeria has always evolved one way or the other to combat the scourge of corruption (see Ajayi, 2003; Amao, 2002; Yaqub, 2003: 194-200). In spite of these efforts corruption has continued to soar to an unprecedented height. This is not unconnected with the rentier character of the Nigerian state, and that of its predatory elites (see Osaghae, 1998; Omotola, 2002; Amao, 2003). of course, while this had its root in the colonial history of the country, it has however, permeated every fact of the Nigeria state and society. It is this pervasive and endemic nature of corruption that brought about significant distortions in the political economy of the country in terms of power and property relations. This lies at the heart of the crisis and contradiction of development to which the country has been enmeshed over the years.

#### **EFFECT OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA**

Many studies have been conducted that show the evils and of consequences of corruption. And corruption has taught the Nigeria a dangerous and wrong lesson that it does not pay to be honest, hardworking and law abiding. Through corrupt means many political office holder acquire wealth and properties in and outside Nigeria; and many display their wealth (which is beyond the means), but the society does not blink. This has made politics a big business in Nigeria, because anything spent to secure a political office is regarded as an investment, which matures immediately one gets into office. (The Guardian, July, 14, 2002).

Corruption waste skills as previous time is often wasted to set up unending committees to fight corruption, and to monitor public projects. It also leads to aid forgone; some foreign donors do not give aids to corrupt nations. For instance, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has withdrawn development support from some nations that are notoriously corrupt and the World Bank has introduced tougher anti corruption standards into its leading policies' to corrupt countries. Similarly, other organizations such as the council of Europe and the organization of American States are talking tough measures

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Corruption is politically destabilizing as it leads to social revolution and Military takeovers. Most "post coup rationalizations" in less developed worlds point to corruption. The General Buhari's post-coup rationalization is a case in point. (Welch Jr., 1987). But hinging under the excuse of corruption to topple a legitimate government in Nigeria will seize to be a credible reason for the involvement of the military in Nigerian politics in future. This is because many of the previously military leaders in Nigeria were as corrupt, if not more corruption was even blamed for the first 1966, military coup in Nigeria (and that in Ghana too). However, the post electoral crisis in the Western Region and the fear of Northern domination of the affairs of Nigeria were other reasons (Wallersterin and Kilson, 1966).

Corruption causes a reduction in quality of goods and services available to the public, as some companies could cut corners to increase profit margins. Corruption effects investment, economic growth, and government expenditure choices; it also reduces private investment (Mauro, 1997). Bribery and corruption, the culture of late payment and corruption, the culture of late payments, delays or refusal of payment for services already done, are according to the Lord Bishop of Gurford, David Peck, Scaring away British investors, from Nigeria. He notes that those who fail to pay companies for services done seem to forget that the "life blood of any company is its cash flow". And rightly points out that, "the price of corruption is poverty" (Daily trust, July 9, 2002). Because of the widespread of "petty" and "grand" the international business community regard the whole of African as a sinkhole that swallows their money with little or no return" (Callaghy, 1994). With the recent changes in the political economy of East Europe, the attention of the business world has been turned to this area where they may reap quicker results from their investments.

One African development could not say it any belter<sup>16</sup>. Eastern Europe is (now) the sexiest beautiful girl and we (Africa) are an old tattered lady people are tired of Africa. So many countries, so many wars", (Newsweek, 1994). As we have seen, what is happening in Africa is a blue print of the problem facing Nigeria. The nation's "unworkable economic policies, are victims of blatant corruption. "In fact, the "fossilized system" of government has brought almost everything to a halt (Adams, 1995). Thus, corruption discourages honest effort and valuable economic activities, and it breeds inefficiency and nepotism. Corruption leads to possible "information distortion" as it 'cooks the books, and a high level of corruption can make public policies ineffective' (Sen, 1999: 135, Reuters, 2002).

Above all, corruption can tarnish the image of a country. As we have seen, Nigeria suffers more than most nations from an appalling international image created by its inability to deal with corruption and bribery.

According to one who has lived in Nigeria, was almost unavailable, as morality is related, because to survived people have to make money. The 1996 study of corruption by Transparency International and Gottingen University ranked Nigeria as the most corrupt

nations, among 54 nations listed in the study, with Pakistan as the second highest (Moore 1997: 4). As this was not too bad enough, the 1998 transparency international Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of 85 countries, Nigeria was 81 out of the 86 countries pooled (lipset of Leitz, 2000: 113). And in 2001 Corruption Perception Index (CPI), the image of Nigeria slipped further down South (ranked 90 out of 91 countries pooled) with second position as most corrupt nations, with Bangladesh coming first.

Corruption upsets ethnic balance, and exacerbates problems of national integration in developing countries. For instance, if a corrupt but popular ethnic leader is replaced in his or her position, it may upset ethnic arithmetic and the cohorts may revolt. The social brawl that followed the Moshood Abiola's election rebuff is of the many cases dotting Nigeria's political landscape. Southerners (mainly Yorubas from his ethnic South west) rioted, as they felt they were mistreated by the Northern Oligarchy. Similarly, some politicians from the Northern part of the country seem to have forgotten the atrocities committed by general Buhari, Babangida, and Abubakar during their regime (they even refused to testify before the oputa panel), because they are their "home boys? Any attempt to bring them to justice would lead their cronies to ethnic and social conflicts and possible loss of innocent lives.

Corruption is also destructive of governmental structures and capacity. The NEWS, in its July 11, 1999 edition, caption: THE FACE OF A LIAR, broke the news of "forgery" and "perjury" committed by the former speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Ibrahim Salisu Buhari. Through corrupt means, Alhaji Ibrahim Salisu Buhari amassed wealth (he made millions working for NEPA), and bribed his way to the fourth highest position in the land. This scandal dominated the political agenda of Nigeria for some time. President Olusegun Obasanjo disappointed the world by granting Alhaji Ibrahim Salisu Buhari a state pardon, despite his apparent campaign to transform Nigeria into a corruption free society, (Obasanjo inaugural speech, May 29, 1999). The "Buharigate" as the scandal was later called, nearly destroyed Nigeria's democratic experiment. Corruption can destroy the legitimacy of a government. It could violate modern oriented civil servants and may cause them to reduce or withdraw their services or to leave the country. Corruption is one of the reasons for the "brain drain" phenomenon in Nigeria (talents) professionals leaving the country in search of employment somewhere else. In Nigeria, you can hardly enter an office and get your "file" signed except you drop some money. Even the securities personnel at the door of every office will ask for (bribe) tips (Suberu, 1994).

In other words, corruption leads to slow moving of files that get through the desk of officers once the interested parties have compromised themselves". It also leads to mission files desk officer is settled," unnecessary bureaucracy and "delays until fees are paid" (Oloja, the Guardian, April 21, 2002).

In Summary, corruption diverts scarce public resources into private pockets, literally undermines effective governance, endangers democracy and erodes the social and moral

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#### *Corruption And The Crisis Of Development In Nigeria.*

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#### **CONCLUSION**

Corruption, beyond its moral and shocking aspects, it could be said to be the major obstacle to development which is synonymous to democracy. Several factors have been identified in the political economy of corruption which had led to the crises of development in Nigeria. A major factor is the colonial origin of the Nigeria state "post colonial" variant, and the parasitic nature of its ruling elites. These have enabled the parasitism of the state, as a result of which all efforts at taming the hydra-headed phenomenon of corruption have proved feckless and unproductive.

Moreover, under the prevailing circumstances, whatever measures put in place would only minimize or reduce, rather than eradicate corruption ultimately, the solution to the problem might require a complete overhaul of the post colonial state and the dependent capitalist political economy currently in existence.

It has been concluded that corruption is not peculiar to Nigeria only, but many laws are already on the book to fight corruption Nigeria (including those crafted by the International Organizations). But what is important now, as Peter Elgen, chairman of the watch dog group, Transparency International has noted, is "the political will to fight corruption at home "Countries".

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