

Political Corruption and Underdevelopment in Nigerian Fourth Republic

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ABSTRACT: Political corruption has been blamed for the continued underdevelopment of Nigeria. Despite the creation of two anti-corruption agencies, corruption still thrives in Nigeria. This study was undertaken to evaluate the impact of corruption on national development in Nigeria fourth republic. The study relied on secondary source of data collection. From the findings of this paper, corruption takes place in the executive and legislative arms of government. Furthermore, the study pinpoints how corruption by the political class hinder development in Nigeria. Finally, the study outlines some suggestions to prevent corruption in the government circle in order to move the country forward.

KEYWORDS: Democracy, Developmet, Fouth republic, Financial corruption, Political corruption, Undervelopment.

1 INTRODUCTION

The term 'first republic' in Nigeria was the period when Nigeria became a republic after independence from Great Britain in 1960. The era lasted from 1963 to 1966 because of the military intervention in the governance of the country which brought the first republic to an abrupt end (Akanade and Akanade (2011)). The first republic was characterized by ethnicity, nepotism and an unprecedented level of corruption. According to Ogbeidi (2012) " the First Republic under the leadership of Sir Abubakar Tafawl Balewa, the Prime Minister, and Nnamdi Azikwe, the President, was marked by widespread corruption. Government officials looted public funds with impunity. Federal Representatives and Ministers flaunted their wealth with reckless abandon. In fact, it appeared there were no men of good character in the political leadership of the First Republic. Politically, the thinking of the First Republic Nigerian leadership class was based on politics for material gain; making money and living well." Due to the level of corruption and other reasons best known to the military, it then toppled the government of Sir Abubarka Balewa. The installation of civilian government in 1979 by the military paved way for the second republic in Nigeria. The second republic lasted for only four years because the military accused the politicians of a high level of corruption. Many prominent politicians were jailed for financial corruption by the military junta. The third republic in Nigeria did not last because it was derailed and truncated by the General Ibrahim Babangida's administration.

The fourth republic commenced with the handover of power by the military administration to a democratic elected civilian government on May 29, 1999. The return of democratic governance was greeted with widespread jubilation. However, fifteen years of uninterrupted democracy, the country has witnessed a resurgence of corruption which has undermined national development in Nigeria. The worrisome trend in the magnitude of financial corruption by politicians prompted the Obasanjo's government to introduce two anti-corruption agencies, the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). Taking into cognizance of the history of corruption in Nigeria since independence, the Obasanjo led-federal government introduced two special anti-corruption agencies to checkmate the devastating effect of corruption in the Nigerian economy (Ogbeidi 2012). Ogundiya (2012) asserts that corruption is so rampant in the fourth republic that in every newspaper front page cover always carries news about financial corruption by politicians. It is argued that corruption is the bane to Nigerian development and it retard economic growth. It remains an insurmountable problem (Ayobulu, 2006). It is an impediment to Nigeria economic and political progress (Sachs, 2005). "It is a canker worm that has eaten deep in the fabric of the country and had stunted growth in all sectors" (Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), 2005). It has been the primary reason behind the country's underdevelopment (Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), 2006). Smith (2007) posits that in all the challenges

Nigeria is passing through, corruption remains the main obstacle to Nigerian development that has increased poverty and inequality. Subscribing to this notion, renowned novelist, Chinua Achebe in his epic book, 'The Trouble with Nigeria' emphasized that the trouble with the country called Nigeria is that political leaders use the instrument of power to commit and maintain corruption (Achebe 1983). It is in the backdrop of the proclamation by Achebe that this paper has investigated corruptions in the Nigerian context and how corruption has hindered the development of the country and the study provides some recommendations in order to fast-track growth and development of the Nigerian economy.

1.1 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

In order to give credence to this study, it is necessary to define corruption and underdevelopment.

1.2 CORRUPTION

Corruption in the layman's language means using one's position to collect bribe from someone who is in need of assistance such as seeking for admission into a higher institution or seeking for an employment in an establishment. Corruption goes beyond this, the World Bank conceptualizes corruption as:

"The abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abused for private gain when official accepts edicts or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can also be abused for the personal benefits even if no bribery occurs through patronage and nepotism, the thief of state assets or the diversion of state revenue."

Given credence to this definition, Salisu (2000) encapsulates corruption to mean the mismanagement of public funds for private gain. For instance, funds that are supposed to be used for development purposes in Nigeria are pocketed by politicians at the detriment of the nation's development. Atelhe and Agada (2014) make us understand that political corruption happens in a democratic setting. It rears its head when politicians and political decision makers who are the custodian of the law for the benefit of all are corrupt. Political corruption is unlawful, immoral and unofficial exploitation of one's political position for personal gain (Nager et al (2013). For various forms of political corruption see (Bayart et al. 1997; Girling 1999; Fairbanks, Jr. 1999) for details. Also see Obayelu (2007) for causes of corruption in Nigeria.

1.3 MAKING SENSE OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Academic scholars from the West believed that African underdevelopment is caused by the mode of production imposed externally (Zambakari, 2012). Some scholars such as (Amin 1972; Rodney, 1972) are of the views that Africa system of penetrating into the world economy is responsible for its underdevelopment. Other academic scholars blamed the condition imposed by the Breton Wood Institutions i.e the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IFM) on Africa for its underdevelopment see (Amin, 2010b; Easterly, 2001; Goldstein & Montiel, 2007) for more details. On the other hand, (Amin, 1990; Arrighi, 2007) assert that the problem of underdevelopment in Africa lies with the system of production and the capitalist system. However, new research by African scholars has put the blame of the continent underdevelopment on the doorstep of African leaders. They argued on this hypothesis that corruption in Africa leads to the continent's underdevelopment. This assumption is based on that funds that would have been used to develop the continent are stolen by African leaders and splashed in foreign accounts overseas. The proponents of this theory are (Nageri et al. 2013; Agbiboa, 2012; Maunro, 2007; Obayelu, 2007; Sachs, 2005; Smith 2007). Underdevelopment means when a nation's potentials or resources are not fully utilized for the benefit of all in a country. Walter Rodney makes us understand that underdevelopment is not the absence of development (Rodney, 1973). If so, what then is development? "Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being" (ibid). In a similar vein, (Seer, 1977; Goulet, 1978; Egharevba, 2007; Lawal, 2007) conceptualize development as the growth in human society that incorporates quality of life, equality, income distribution, social justice. At the same time, development entails economic, political and cultural transformation.

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What is the cause of the third world underdevelopment? This issue has polarized the academic world into three groups. The modernization theorists such as Emile Durkheim, David Apter, David McClelland and Wait Rostow argued that developing countries have to follow the development path of Rich Western Nations before they can develop. However, the dependency school of thought that has the likes of Walter Rodney, Francois Perrous, Kurt Rothschild, Walden Bello and

Kunibert Raffer counter the modernization theorists assumption of underdevelopment in third world countries. Their argument is that the rich Western nations are responsible for the underdevelopment of countries in the global south. The third group that has emanated from what Samuel Huttenton called the 'conflict of interest' is the African scholars that posit that African leaders are the cause of the economic woe of the continent. In the fold of this new school of thought are (Nageri et al. 2013; Agbiboa, 2012; Maunro, 2007; Obayelu, 2007; Sachs, 2005; Smith 2007). Their hypothesis is based on the fact that Africa is endowed with natural resources and money that is accrued from the sale of the mineral resources to other countries that are supposed to be used to increase the quality of life for Africans are misappropriated by African leaders. It is on this account that Adewale asserts that "corruption is an act of diverting the resources that should have been used for the developmental purposes of the society to private or personal use. The accumulation of the nation's economic resources for personal benefits had variously contributed to the leakage of capital from Nigeria for illegal deposits abroad." He further stated that corruption has a crowding effect on the growth and development of the country. "Its contributing effects on poverty and poor infrastructural development is more worrying." (Adewale 2011 cited in Nagari et al. 2013). Fabayo et al. (2011) take a critical look at the impact of corruption on investment in Nigeria using the Ordinary Least Square modus operandi and the Transparency International (TI) corruption index between 1996 to 2010. In their analysis, they revealed that Nigeria is always at the bottom of (IT) rankings which indicated that the increased high-level of corruption in Nigeria leads to lower investment drive and slippery economic growth. In a similar study, Akindele (2005) evaluates the interface between corruption and development. The empirical results of the study after using some economic variables denote that corruption hinder economic development. He concluded that there is a strong negative relation between corruption and development nexus and corruption remains the core barrier to the development of any society. Further to this, Adewale (2011) examines the crowding-out effect of corruption in the Nigeria fourth republic. Using the simulation approach to evaluate the effects of financial corruption in Nigeria. He pinpoints from his empirical findings that corruption retards economic growth in Nigeria which implies that corruption has a crowding-out impact on economic growth. In addition, new African scholars in the horizon such as (Nageri et al. 2013; Agbiboa, 2012; Maunro, 2007; Obayelu, 2007; Sachs, 2005; Smith 2007) are of the view that corruption is the bane to African development.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purpose of this study political elite theory will be our operational guide.

3.1 POLITICAL ELITE THEORY

Elite theory is a theory of the state that described the power relationships in a contemporary society. The theory asserts that a small clique (minority group) composing of members of the political class and the policy making network hold the most power in a state and they exert substantial power over policy decisions. Vergara (2013) posits that the elite is a small powerful group that controls large amount of power. Pareto (1963) emphasized the psychological and knowledgeable power that the political elite has obtained and he considered them to be the governing elite. The political elite is a cabinet of people that control the reign of government (Vergara (2013). In the Nigerian context, the political elite is a group of people you see in government institutions such as the Presidency, National Assembly and the Federal Executive Council that control government machinery. At the state level, they control government apparatus. They include governors and members of the State Houses of Assembly. Renowned constitutional lawyer, Professor Itse Sagay has berated the political elite in Nigeria for the country's underdevelopment. He accused members of the National Assembly for consuming large amount of the country's wealth as salaries at the expense of Nigeria's development. The former Central Bank of Nigeria Governor Sanusi Lamido corroborated this fact when he said in 2010 that the National Assembly members that are less than 1 percent of the population consumed 25 percent of the nation's budget. Billions of dollars have been mismanaged by the ruling class since independence which have dragged the country's development into crisis. The former EFCC chairman Nuhu Ribadu and the former World Bank Vice President for Africa Oby Ezekweleze have estimated that over 400 billion dollars have been stolen from the Nigerian coffer by public office holders since independence. Corruption breeds poverty and that is why there is the prevalence of poverty in Nigeria. In a similar manner, poverty breeds insecurity. The security challenges befalling Nigeria has been blamed for the high-level poverty in the country (Awojobi 2014).

4 POLITICAL CORRUPTION IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC (1999-2014)

The first, second and third republic in Nigeria was characterized by widespread corruption that gave the military the impetus to overthrow democratic governance. The irony of this is that even the military that came into power in some instances to save the country from the grip of Kleptocratic government (rule by thieves) are enmeshed in an unprecedented level of corruption. The fourth republic has not been exempted from widespread corruption despite the two anti-corruption

agencies that were created by the Obasanjo's administration. The next section will analyze financial corruption in government institutions since 1999 to 2014.

4.1 FINANCIAL CORRUPTION IN THE PRESIDENCY AND FEDERAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The Presidency is the highest political office in Nigeria and it has been enmeshed with corrupt tendency. During the reign of Obasanjo from 1999-2007, the presidency was involved in a corruption scandal. For example, the former vice president, Atiku Abubakar was indicted by Senate committee set by the Senate Chamber to investigate the vice president role in the activities of the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF). Aside the vice president, Obasanjo also used his influence as the president of the country to acquire shares at Transcorp. Further to this, Obasanjo used his political power to persuade the economic elite of the country to build a presidential library for him in Abeokuta. In addition, the 16 billion dollars that was budgeted for power generation in the 8-year reign of Obasanjo cannot be accounted for since there is still erratic power supply in Nigeria. Yar'Adua succeeded Obasanjo in 2007. The Yar'Adua seems to have a clean bill of health on corruption. However, he was accused of bowing to the whims and caprices of the politicians who bankrolled his election to remove the dogged former EFCC chairman, Nuhu Ribadu. Just like Obasanjo, the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan was embroiled in a controversy when an Italian construction firm built a church as a gift to the president in his home community of Otuoke in Bayelsa state. The president Jonathan has also been accused of conspiracy silence in the corruption allegation levelled against the Minister of Petroleum. Furthermore, the incumbent president have been berated for granting presidential pardons to convicted political criminals. Among the federal ministers since 1999 that have been accused of corruption included Sunday Afolabi, Fabian Osuji, Hussaini Zannuwa Akwanga, Alice Osomo and Stell Oduha.

4.2 FINANCIAL CORRUPTION IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The National Assembly is the watchdog of the executive arm of government. The separation of power in the presidential system of government allows the National Assembly to checkmate the excess of the Executive which include financial monitoring of Budget spending. However, since the installation of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, some members of the National Assembly have used the legislative power bestowed on them to enrich themselves illegally. Take for instance, two former Senate presidents, Chuba Okadigbo and Adolphus Wabara were involved in a corruption scandal. Other Senators and honorable members of the national assembly that have been engulfed in corruption scandals include Chimaroke Nnamani, Iyabo Obasanjo, Dimeji Bankole and his deputy, Patricia Etteh and her deputy, Farouk Lawal, Boniface Emanalo, Ndudi Elumelu and Herman Hembe. However, the likes of former speaker Dimeji Bankole and his deputy, and Edudi Elumelu have been exonerated by the civil court of corruption charges.

4.3 FINANCIAL CORRUPTION AT THE STATE LEVEL

Corruption at the federal level is also being replicated at the state level. Just of recent the Minister of Finance tasked Nigerians to ask their governors what are they doing with the federal allocation they do receive from the federation account. She made this suggestion because the huge allocation to some of the states did not indicate the presence of physical development in these states. In a nutshell, what this indicates is that most of the governors are using allocation to these states for their personal gain. That was the reason the former EFCC chairman Nuhu Ribadu 2006 once said that 31 state governors have corruption cases to answer. However, when Ribadu was replaced by Farida Waziri, she let Nigerians know that the case files of the 31 governors were missing up to this present moment. Among the former and present governors in the fourth republic that have been convicted and have corruption cases with EFCC are Diepreye Alamieyesigha, James Ibori, Uzor Kalu, Genga Daniel, Alao Akala, Rashid Ladoja, Samimu Turaki, Jolly Nyame. Others are Lucky Igbinedion, Boni Haruna, Attahiru Bafawara and Adamu Abdullahi.

5 HOW POLITICAL CORRUPTION UNDEVELOPED NIGERIA IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

Corruption is a by-product of underdevelopment. In Nigeria, funds that are allocated to the development of the country after the installation of democratic governance in 1999 are mismanaged by political office holders. For instance, the Minister of Finance bemoaned the absence of physical development in most states of the federation despite the huge federal allocation to these states. According to Ngwube and Okoli (2013) corruption leads to the use of resources to finance elephant projects at the expense of infrastructural development such as schools, hospitals, roads, water supply and electricity supply. Osoba (1996) cited in Alemika (2012) posits that financial corruption dent a nation's capacity to provide the basic necessity of life for the populace. Political corruption is the main factor responsible for Nigeria underdevelopment in all sectors (Egharevba and Chiazor, 2012). "The 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). Since democracy berth in Nigeria in 1999, corruption has constituted a major hindrance to development in the country. For the past 15 years, budgetary allocations for infrastructure development have not yielded any positive achievement. For instance, billion of dollars were allocated for the Turn Around Maintenance (TAM) of the four refineries, yet the refineries are not working to full capacity. The health and the power sectors are in comatose due to corruption. Furthermore, the majority of the federal roads are dead traps because funds that are allocated for the maintenance these roads are mismanaged. The former governor of Abia State, Uzor Kalu once accused the former Minister of Works Tony Anenih of the embezzlement of N3 billion that was meant for the maintenance of federal roads. Corruption in Nigeria has been blamed for the high-rate of poverty in the country, for example, the official released of the poverty profile of Nigeria by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) revealed that 112 million Nigerians live in relative poverty. This data was supported by the confirmation of the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) representative in Nigeria that said 100 million Nigerians live in destitution. Just of recent, the World Bank named Nigeria as the third country in the world with a large number of poor people. Poverty is a by-product of insecurity. The security challenges that are facing Nigeria have been blamed on the high level of corruption and poverty in the country. The hypothesis is that corruption breeds poverty and poverty breeds insecurity. Despite the government effort through the two anti corruption agencies to curtail corruption. The menace still continues unabated. The EFCC has been accused of not doing enough to prosecute corrupt politicians. The president has also been accused of using the EFCC to go after political opponents. Former United State Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton accused the EFCC under the leadership of Farida Waziri of inept. Nigeria has always remained at the bottom of the (TI) corruption index ranking because of the high-degree of corruption in the country (Adesote and Abimbola (2012). Protagonists of the corruption lead to underdevelopment hypothesis are (Nageri et al. 2013; Agbiboa, 2012; Mauro, 2007; Obayelu, 2007; Sachs, 2005; Smith 2007). According to Adesote and Abimbola (2012), “there is a correlation between financial corruption and national development in Nigeria. The essence of financial corruption is bribery and illegal and greedy acquisition of public funds into private pockets, which otherwise would have been invested for the public good. Financial corruption undermines democracy and the legitimate of the state, reduces the potential for economic growth, and threatens the freedom and security of citizens, altogether constitutes hindrances to national development.” Mohammed (2013) gave a summary how political corruption hinders development in the new democratic dispensation in Nigeria:

- Poor social welfare
- Loss of public trust and legitimacy by the government
- Increase insecurity
- Increased poverty and unemployment
- Low investment

Aside all these, one main area that corruption has hinders is the decay in infrastructure. For instance, health services, water supply, power supply, good roads, sound education are a mirage in the fourth republic, despite the promised made to Nigerians during election campaigns that all these areas will be addressed by the new democratic government. Fifteen years after, the story remains the same or even getting worse and this is one of the reasons Nigerians have turn India to their medical tourism because of inadequate medical facilities and manpower at the government hospitals.

6 SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 SUGGESTIONS

- The government should strengthen the powers of the EFCC and ICPC in order for the two agencies to prosecute corruption offenders without delay.
- There is a need of the independence of EFCC in order to prevent government interference in its operations.
- Special anti-corruption court should be established to quicken all corruption cases.
- The government should stop granting pardon to convicted political criminals.

6.2 CONCLUSION

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 giant stride 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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