

Corruption and Governance in Africa: A Case Analysis of Nigeria

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Abstract

Corruption is a universal phenomenon. It has been around human societies for a very long time. The prevalence of corruption for centuries has forced many academia and policy makers to view it as an unavoidably part of human evolution. Many civilisations throughout history are known to have successfully put public policy in place to minimise corruption and its detrimental effects on their political, social and economic system. However, the situation was different with the new African states following their independence. It was perceived that the new indigenous leaders would use public policy to enhance the creation of wealth that could be used to improve the welfare of all the people, but rather embarked on reforms that produced laws and institutions that offered them opportunities to maximise their personal interests. This work therefore was to analyse the effect of such personal interest namely; corruption on governance in Africa with particular reference to Nigeria. Through historical and descriptive analysis of the facts, the study has revealed that in Africa and particularly in Nigeria, the state

activities have promoted corruption and other forms of opportunism. The study also revealed that corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of our nation and can be described as part of our culture. The study further revealed that despite legal and administrative framework put in place to combat corruption in Nigeria, implementation and enforcement of policies are weak, even those meant to fight corruption war are themselves corrupt. The resultant effect is bad governance characterised by massive infrastructural decay such as dilapidated roads, epileptic power supply, poor health care services and lack of access to portable water, massive poverty, hunger, malnutrition and unemployment. Based on this, the work has recommended that Nigerian government should embark on expansive education which aim is for national development and ethical orientation. Also, our leaders should be committed to the course of instituting good governance by strengthening our democratic institutions for the overall well-being and development of the nation.

Introduction

Corruption in one form or another is a universal phenomenon. It has been around human societies for a very long time. While virtually all civilization throughout history have encountered corruption, it has not had a uniform impact on these countries. The prevalence of corruption for centuries has forced many academia and policy makers to view it as an unavoidable part of human evolution. Many civilisation throughout history are known to have successfully put machinery (public policy) in place to minimize corruption and its detrimental effects on their political, social and economic system.

However, the situation was different with the emergence of new African states or following African independence. It was expected that African independence would usher in a period characterised by good governance, that is, peaceful coexistence and

significant improvement in the wealth creating capacity of each new nation. It was also perceived that the new indigenous leaders would use public policy to enhance the creation of wealth that could be used to improve the welfare of all the people. Sad to say that, the leaders of many of these new countries engaged primarily in opportunistic institutional reforms that produced laws and institutions that were not geared toward maximizing the public interest, but offered the new state custodians opportunities to maximize their personal interests.

The fact remains that in many of these countries, no serious attempt was made to encourage the development of indigenous entrepreneurial activities. Instead, the new leaders undertook reforms, which improved their ability to monopolise political power and use state structure for their private capital accumulation. By the late 1970s many African ruling elites had converted state structure into instrument of plunder for their personal benefit, thereby giving rise to new patrimonial system, rent-seeking and prebendal politics. A situation which has continued till today (Vande Walle, 1994 and Joseph, 1999).

In Africa generally and particularly in Nigeria, the state activities have promoted corruption and other forms of opportunism and in the process have promoted inequalities and injustice in the distribution of natural resources. For example, in 1999 (about 13 years ago) the economist estimated that African leaders had stored \$20 bn in Swiss bank accounts. Also, university of Massachusetts have equally estimated that from 1970 to 1996, capital flight from 30 Sub-Saharan countries totalled \$187 bn, outstripping those same nations' external debt (Igwe, 2012). Ordinarily good governance should serve as an engine of economic and social development thereby ensuring justice and equity in the distribution of natural resources, but instead, governance by African ruling elites is used as an instrument of capital accumulation for personal gain.

Conceptualising Corruption and Good Governance

Corruption as a concept has no universally acceptable definition, the reason being that it is multi-dimensional in nature. However, different scholars have conceived it in different ways.

Ackay (2006) sees corruption as a symptom of deep institutional weakness which leads to inefficient economic, social, and political outcomes. It reduces economic growth, retards long-term foreign and domestic investment, enhances inflation, depreciates national currency, reduces expenditures for education and health, increases military expenditures and misallocates talent to rent-seeking activities. Corruption also pushes firms underground, distorts markets and the allocation of resources, increases income inequality and poverty, reduces tax revenue, increases child and infant mortality rates, distort the fundamental role of the government on enforcement of contracts and protection of property.

According to Eminue (2005), corruption is the behaviour of public officials which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve private ends. The author further conceived it as a general terms covering misuse of authority as a result of consideration of personal gain, embezzlement, stealing or misappropriation of public funds. Miller (2008) defined corruption as the abuse of entrusted authority for private gain. Corruption in Africa according to the author has reached cancerous proportions that it has been as destroying the future of many societies in the region.

Ikejiani – Clark (2005) explains corruption from individualistic as well as systematic perspectives. The individualistic approach looks at corruption as the entire or gaining of position of power and trust by evil and dishonest persons. The author observes further that a corrupt and fraudulent individual is one who strays from the prevailing norm of official public behaviour. Corruption is then seen as incidental to the working of society which might be safeguarded by appropriate laws and exhortations. So to think of corrupt behaviour in individual terms is not to recognise the existence

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of systematic corruption.

On the other hand, systematic approach recognises corruption as a social fact. It describes more accurately a situation where wrong doing has become the norm, and the standard accepted behaviour necessary to accomplish organisational goals. In such a case, aberrant behaviour has become so regularised and institutionalised that the system or organizational support prop-up and sustain wrong doing and actually penalize those who live up to the old norm.

In its strict sense, Mamadu (2009) sees corruption as an act of being dishonest with a given responsibility or duty for selfish ends. It is the use of a position of trust for dishonest and selfish gain. Commenting further, it involves the violation of established rules for personal gains and inordinate profit making. It also entails efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means, private gains at public expense: or misuses of public power for private benefits.

In the whole, we can deduce that corruption erodes the dignity of human persons, distorts the moral norms, principles or obligations of a nation. It incapacitates the development of any given nation, it depreciates the value of honesty, patriotism, it promotes misappropriation and/or misapplications of funds, capital flight, and shortage of capital. Above all, it promotes bad governance.

The concept of governance entails the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interest, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences (UNDP, 1997).

World Bank (1997) sees governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources. It identified three distinct aspects of governance:

- i. The form of political regime;
- ii. The process by which authority is exercised in the

management of a country's economic and social resources for development; and

- iii. The capacity of government to design, formulates, and implements policies and discharge functions.

On the other hand, the concept of "good governance" often emerges as a model to compare ineffective economics or political bodies with viable economic and political bodies. The concept revolves around the responsibility of governments and governing bodies to meet the needs of the masses as opposed to selected groups of people in the society (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/good_governance retrieved 6th February, 2013).

Asian Development Bank in collaboration with World Bank regards good governance as synonymous with sound development management. It concerns norms of behaviour that helps ensure that governments actually deliver to their citizens what they say they will deliver (World Bank, 2003).

Good governance flows logically from the concept of governance. Governance becomes good when it is operated in accordance with legal and ethical principles as conceived by society. Good governance promotes equity, participation, pluralism, transparency, accountability and the rule of law in a manner that is effective, efficient and enduring. It is worth mentioning that the greatest threats to good governance come from corruption which undermines transparency, security and fundamental freedom (www.un.org/en/global_issues/governance/ retrieved February 10, 2013). Poor governance holds back and distorts the process of development, and has negative impact on the overall development of the society as evidenced in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular.

Corruption in Nigeria: A general Overview

Nigeria is a nation with so many ethnic groups of about 384 tribes, with Hausa, Yoruba and Igbos as the major tribes. Corruption is a household name in Nigeria. The genesis of corruption in Nigeria

is traceable to the character of a few among our traditional leaders to our founding fathers (nationalists). Prior to independence, for example, some traditional leaders in appointing officers to occupy their own court received bribe from these people, who in turn received from their clients proceeds from their exalted offices. Also common were forced labour, bribes and gift, arbitrary fines and illicit taxes. All these helped to sustain a system of client without any complain by the peasant or masses. This was followed by our nationalist who encouraged tribal and ethnic politics (Igwe, 2012 and Madu, 2009).

Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2009 reveals that the general public considers political parties and parliament as the most corrupt bodies in Nigeria. Added to this, Human Right Watch 2007 estimates that the endemic nature of corruption in Nigeria led to the loss of \$380 million US dollars between independence 1960 – 1999, when democratic elections were first held (www.trust.org/trustlaw/country-profile/good-governance. Retrieved 20th February, 2013).

Today, Nigeria stands out unarguably as the malversation of systemic and all other forms of corruption and the vicious circle is not structurally inhibited, but occurs in all forms and at all levels, such that an encounter with any public official normally ends with one form of bribe or the other. Taking a cursory look at our bureaucratic structure reveals that everyone is caught up in the web of corruption. For example where the crime becomes an open secret, prosecution is stalled because all those capable of prosecuting the crime are caught in the web also or are instructed from 'the above' to hands off the case. Also, any one in the command chain who objects to getting involved is coerced by an offer such a person cannot possibly refuse or receive threat of removal from the position or office he or she occupies (Igwe, 2012).

The behaviour of public officials which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve private ends in Nigeria is so

entrenched that in May 2004, the Minister of State for Finance who was also the Chairman of the Federation Account Committee (FAAC), had accused the state governors of squandering their states' monthly statutory allocations on foreign exchange procurement and foreign trips, with hardly anything to show for the monies they were collecting (Eminue, 2005).

In collaborative evidence, an investigation embarked upon recently in Nigeria revealed that a mind boggling sum of over N5 trillion has been stolen through fraud embezzlement by public office holders since President Goodluck Jonathan assumed office in 2010. This figure was arrived at by summing up the amount of government funds said to have been stolen as revealed by some investigative panels set up by the government, including Mallam Nuhu Ribadu led Petroleum Task Force Report, the Minister of Trade and Investment's report on stolen crude oil; the House of Representatives Fuel Subsidy Report and investigation into the ecological fund (Igede.org/2012/12/06/worsening-casesof-corruption). All these portend how insidious and virulent corruption has undermined development in Nigeria.

A case analysis of corruption in Nigeria

Corruption is a household name in Nigeria. It has become the order of the day. According to Achebe (1983), the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership where political power is used to perpetrate and sustain corruption. The current exposures of corrupt practices of the ruling elite (officialdom) points to the fact that corruption is indeed a great problem or monster for Nigeria, especially its devastating effects on governance. Available facts and figures show that from 1960, corruption and bad leadership have drowned the destiny of the Nigerian nation, and has always been part of the Nigerian government. An in-depth analysis of some corrupt practices right from independence and its effects on national, state and local government will suffice.

Independence and the 1st republic 1960 – 1966

Corruption, though, was prevalent during independence and 1st Republic, was kept at manageable levels. The cases of corruption during the period were sometimes clouded by political tussle such as the Hausa-Fulani accusing Yoruba of dominating the economy and the public service. The Igbo blame their woes on the Hausa – Fulani impregnable political machine and the Yorubas machine “mafia”. The minorities accused the major tribes of political, religious and cultural oppression (Ikejiani – Clark, 2005).

The first major political figure investigated for questionable practices that involved African Continental Bank was Nnamdi Azikiwe. The bank Report showed that although Azikiwe had resigned as the chairman of the Bank, but the chairman who took over from him was his agent which shows that most of the paid-up capital of the bank (African Continental Bank) was from the Eastern Regional Corporation.

In the Western Nigeria, politician Adegoke Adelabu was investigated for charges of political corruption levelled against him by the opposition. The Report led to a call for his resignation as district council head. Also, in 1962, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was indicted and the Coker Commission of Enquiry was set-up which found out that a substantial amount of money was misappropriated from the cover of the Western Regional Government.

In the Northern region, there were cases of corrupt allegations levelled against some native authorities in Bornu. The Northern government enacted the Customary Presents Order to forestall any further breach of regulations. To be specific, on February 26, 1952 the Emir of Gwandu moved a motion in the Northern House of Chiefs thus:

That this House, agreeing that bribery and corruption are widely prevalent in all walks of life, recommends that native authorities should make every effort to trace and punish offenders

with strict impartiality and to educate public opinion against bribery and corruption (Adebayo, 1986: 19).

Yakubu Gowon Administration 1966 – 1975

This administration was smeared with corruption scandal especially on cement importation. Many officials of the Defence Ministry and Central Bank of Nigeria were involved in the scandal. Such officials were later accused of falsifying ship manifest and inflating the amount of cements purchased (Maduagwu, 1996).

Murtala Muhammed/Obadanjo Administration (1975 – 1979)

After a coup that brought him into power, Mohammed made reformist changes. This was highly commendable in a country where indiscipline, corruption and apathy had eaten deep into its fabrics. It was a spectacular feat to see a man arrive and shake everyone out of complacency. Within seven months, he had purged the public service of “bad eggs” and “dead wood”. For example, the twelve governors were not only sacked from their offices but also had their properties of worth millions of Naira confiscated. The purge also affected the judiciary, the police and even the universities, (Mmamadu, 2009, Ikime, 1977 and Adebayo, 1986).

Shehu Shagari Administration (1979 – 83)

In 1981, there was accusation about rice shortage levelled against the NPN government. This was occasioned by the policy of protectionism. After Shagari's election, the Nigerian government decided to protect the local rice farmers from imported rice. A licensing system was created to limit the amount of rice import. However, accusation of favouritism and government supported speculation was levelled against many officials (Deonis, 1981).

Also, in 1985, investigation conducted into the collapse of the defunct Johnson Mathey Bank of London revealed abuses carried out

With the emergence of 4th Republic, it was believed that corruption would be tackled through series of reforms which aim was restoration of democracy and good governance in the country. To curb corruption, Obasanjo introduced two strong bodies which were charged with the responsibility of fighting corruption in the country, namely Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC), and Economic and Finance Crimes Commission (EFCC). These bodies supposedly carried out serious fight to curb corrupt practices among our leaders. Later, it was realized that these anti-corruption bodies were merely tools by the Administration to fight political opponents and those who dare challenge the 'wrongs' of the Obasanjo government (Mamadu, 2009).

However, the deception of the Obasanjo's effort failed as corruption became highly "honoured" during his administration. His "third term" agenda exposed Obasanjo and his supporters. In pursuit of third term ambition, the presidency budgeted more than \$990 billion to entice lawmakers to facilitate the agenda. It was also revealed that each House of Assembly in each state of the federation was offered N50 million Naira, while senators and House of Representative members in the defunct joint committee of the National Assembly on 1999 Constitutional Review were alleged to have received \$37,000 U.S. dollars each to encouraged them recommend a review of the tenure clause in the constitution from two to three or four years each for the president (Mamadu, 2009). Also his involvement in the power sector, for instance, following senate probe of the power sector in February 2008, it was discovered that President Obasanjo "aided and abetted" the misappropriation of about \$16 billion US dollars on the sector. Yet, Nigerians barely lived with steady electricity supply for eight hours a day (Vanguard Newspaper, March 2008 and Mustapha, 2010).

during Second Republic. It was uncovered that the Bank acted as a conduit to transfer hard currency for some ruling members in the country (Mamadu, 2009).

Mohammadu Buhari Administration (1983 – 1985)

In 1985, so many politicians were convicted of different corrupt practices under this administration. However, the administration was said to have involved in a few instances of lapses in ethical judgment.

Ibrahim Babangida Administration (1985 – 1993)

This regime encouraged corruption in Nigeria. The height of corruption by this administration was his refusal to account for the Gulf War Windfall estimated to be \$12.4 billion and the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election, (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/corruption_in_Nigeria 6th February, 2013)

Sani Abacha Administration (1993 – 1998)

The death of General Abacha revealed the global nature of corruption in Nigeria. This was evidenced in a French investigation of bribes paid to government officials to ease the amend of a gas plant construction in Nigerian. The investigation led to the freezing of accounts containing about \$100 million US dollars. In a similar direction, in the year 2000, two years after his death, a Swiss Banking Commission Report indicated Swiss Banks for failing to follow compliance process in allowing family and friends of Abacha access to accounts and depositing amount totalling \$600 million US dollars into the account. The same year, it was also uncovered that a total of more than \$1 billion US dollars were found in various account throughout Europe. (Pallister, 2000 and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/corruptioninNigeria 6th February, 2013).

This ugly situation was not limited to Obasanjo Administration, it transcends Yar' Adua to Goodluck Administration. The following facts and figures potent the level of corruption in Nigeria's 4th Republic as showcased by corruption cases of EFCC. Table 1: Corruption cases of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) 2007 – 2011.

Names	Amount Involved
Ayo Fayose (former governor of Ekiti State)	N1.2 billion
Adenike Grange (Former minister of Health)	N300 million
Joshua Dariye (former Governor of Plateau State)	N700 million
Saminu Turaki (former Governor, Jigagwa State)	N36 billion
Orji Uzor Kalu (former Governor, Abia State)	N5 billion
James Ibori (former Governor, Delta State)	N9.2 billion
Iyaba Obasanjo-Bello (former Senator)	N10 million
Lucky Igbinedion (former Governor, Edo State)	N4.3 million
Gabriel Adaku (former Minister of Health)	N300 million
Jolly Nyame (former Governor of Taraba State)	N1.3 billion
Chimaroke Nnamani (former Gov. of Enugu State)	N5.3 billion
Michael Botmans (former Gov. of Plateau State)	N1.5 billion
Kenny Martins (Police Equipment Fund)	N774 million
Prof. Babalola Borishade (former Minister of Aviation)	N5.6 billion
Boni Haruna (former Governor, Adamawa State)	N254 million
Femi Fani-Kayode (former Minister of Aviation)	N250 million
Prince Ibrahim Dumuje (Police Equipment Fund)	N774 million
Bode George (former Chieftain of the Ruling Party, PDP)	N100 billion
Rasheed Ladoja (former Governor of Oyo State)	N6 billion
Mallam Nasir El-Rufai (former Minister of FCT)	Charged for corruption and abuse of office in Abuja Fed. High Court

Attahiru Bafarawa (former Governor of Sokoto State)	N15 billion
Adame Abdullahi, (former Governor of Nassarawa State)	N15 billion
Francis Okokuro (Bayelsa State Accountant general)	N2.4 billion
Timipre Sylva (former State Governor)	Over 2 billion

Source: Ajie and Wokekoro (2012) and www.efccnigeria.org (2012).

The above indices and those not mentioned are obvious that corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of our Nation and can be described as part of our culture. Corruption has been the cause of democratic failure in Nigeria. Commendably, several public strategies and campaign to curb corruption have been put in place during the last three decades, such as Ethical Revolution, (1981) War Against Indiscipline (1984), The National Orientation Movement (1986), The Mass Mobilization for Social Justice (1987), War Against Indiscipline (1986) etc, that notwithstanding it was the year 2000 that witnessed the signing of the Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Act into law by Obasanjo. With this arrangement, three main agencies were created with different mandates regarding corruption namely; The Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) (2000), The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) (2004) and The Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB). Although these legal and administrative frameworks are in place generally, legislation and regulations in Nigeria, enforcement of laws is weak. Those meant to fight corruption are themselves corrupt. The resultant effect of this in efficiency and ineffectiveness of these two bodies are bad governance, injustice, social inequality and above all, it hindered socio and economic development. Characterised by massive infrastructural decay as depicted in dilapidated roads, epileptic power supply, lack of access to portable water, poor health care services, poor sanitation, massive poverty, hunger, malnutrition and unemployment.

The Way Forward to good Governance in Nigeria

No meaningful development can take place in the face of financial rape and rascality by Nigerian political elite. Corruption fundamentally discourages investment and growth. It fosters unaccountable governance as leadership strives to prevent the masses from getting to know exactly how much funds are acquired and how they are put to use. It cost lives, freedom, health, or money. It has dire global consequences, trapping millions in poverty and misery, while breeding social, economic and political unrest. It undermines human and capital development. Above all, it undermines good governance. According to Uya (2008), good governance cannot take firm roots and flourish in an environment of hunger amidst plenty, poor health, inadequate and misdirected education, poor and inadequate shelter, social injustice and physical insecurity as is the case in Nigeria presently, all because of corruption.

All hope is not lost in fighting corruption to enhance good governance in Nigeria. Bribery and corruption once stifled the life of public institutions in all departments of society in America, Britain, France, Russian etc. This persisted until the end of the nineteenth century when the root causes of corruption in the system were destroyed especially in Britain (Adebayo, 1986).

Nigerian government should embark on expansive education which aim is for national development and ethical orientation. She should also incorporate character formation and integrity. The curriculum should be compulsory from primary school to the university level.

Political office holder should see their position as service to the nation rather than for personal gain. The anti-corruption agencies such as EFCC and ICPC should be allowed to operate independently without outside interference and manipulations. Above all, our leaders should be committed to the course of instituting good

governance by strengthening our democratic institutions for the overall well-being and development of the nation.

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