

**AN ASSESSMENT OF CORRUPTION, DEVELOPMENT AND THE NEED FOR
DEMOCRATIC IMPERATIVES IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria has experienced alternating cycles of governance between civil and military regimes for close to four decades. In the country's 40 years of independence, the military ruled the country, albeit intermittently (1966-79 & 1984-1999). For about 28 years. Although Nigeria seem to have broken free from the pernicious grip of military dictatorship, a democratic process that would yield the desired dividends of democracy is yet to be entrenched. Today, democracy is the standard. Democracy is the best form of governance because it counters that most dangerous human frailty: the temptation of leaders to accumulate power for the sake of accumulating more power. However, everyone claims to be democratic but not everyone is faithful to his or her word. Herein lies the rub. Illiberal governments have become adept in exploiting the visible procedural and institutional trappings of democracy without adopting the democratic spirit that gives these procedures and institution their noble meaning. Nigeria has a government that is democratic on paper but not in function. If democracy is to be sustained it must also elevate the performance level of government and the corresponding rights and privileges enjoyed by the citizens. The success of performance of any leadership is often measured by the extent of national cohesion achieved and the level of national development experienced. What has become of poverty? What has happened to unemployment? What is the socio-economic inequality? If all three have declined from high levels, then development has occurred. But if one or two of these central problems have grown worse, especially all three have, it would be wrong to call the result "development" even if GDP has improved. The paper is divided into three sections. Section one examines corruption, section two looks into the issue of development while the third section examines democratic imperatives as a panacea for development crises in Nigeria.

Keywords: Corruption, Development, Democratic Imperatives

INTRODUCTION

Taken together, Nigeria appears like a deepening nightmare in which the country begins to look more like a Somalia as opposed to wholesome social formations like Norway and Switzerland or

even Ghana. Indeed, an in-depth analysis as revealed by the Fund for Peace shows that there was no improvement in all the indices for measuring development. Similarly, the report revealed that nearly 70 percent of Nigerians live below the poverty line while the self-same report was of the dismal perspective that many government officials have become wealthy by taking bribes and embezzling funds. Meanwhile, the indicators for legitimacy, economy and security have also taken a downward drip. It is beyond doubt that these cold statistics have essentially been complemented by nightmarish and real-life situations in which the average Nigerian has to contend with a Hobbesian type of existence. As regards security for instance, the entire country has virtually been turned into theatre of operations by armed robbers and kidnappers while banks have become specific targets of these enemies of society.

Similarly, millions of Nigerians cannot boast of access to fundamental like: basic nutrition, decent accommodation and potable water, indeed, life is short, brutish and nasty in Nigeria. The irony is that the inclement situations sketched above are taking place in a supposedly rich country. And as if to indicate that the beautiful ones are not yet born, the members of National Assembly continue to live up in the context of stinking opulence, which is not reflective in any way of the grim realities that pervade the land.

It is against this background that right-thinking persons tend to believe that the Nigerian state is an evitable candidate for failure. Such failure, which currently stare Nigeria and Nigerian in the face is largely owed to a visionless and rudderless leadership whose bankruptcy take little or no cognizance of the favonian dictum that: every generation must out of obscurity, discover its historical mission by fulfilling it or betraying it.

But if the self-serving and delusional antics of the Nigerian leadership are anything to go by, is it evident that this misguided leadership, more than anything else, has betrayed its historical mission. This has been done through its failure to midwife a new a wholesome Nigeria in the post-colonial era.

However, the other side of the equation is equally depressing. This because the followership which should have been demanding on this myopic leadership is also caught between apathy on one hand and false consciousness on the other. With the exception of the few voices from the relatively vibrant civil society, there is what can be called a numbing silence on the part of the populace.

Any state failure in a social formation like Nigeria's carries with it a tragedy of monumental proportions. For instance, such failure can unleash a refugee flow which give Nigeria's demographic strength can swamp the entire West-Central African region. In other words, if the country's poor showing in the Failed State index is anything to go by, every other Nigerian is a potential refugee.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

Concept of Corruption

The United States government's recent report on the role of the government in the proliferation of corruption in Nigeria offers a fresh and undeniable insight into why graft is so deeply entrenched in the Nigerian system. If the government that should stamp out corruption is not actively protecting corrupt individuals, then no amount of posturing will produce results.

However, for a government that is responsible to constructive criticism – a government that means well for the people - the report is an opportunity for the current administration to act by taking firm, honest and decisive to rid of Nigeria of the perennial tag of one of the world's most corrupt nations.

In a detailed and frank assessment that could only be described as stating the obvious, the report, entitled, "Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government," confirmed the often-stated view that the efforts of the anti-graft agencies are deliberately stymied by the government. The allegation of deliberately emasculating the anti-corruption agencies brings to mind recent reports in which the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission confessed that it was broke.

In one of such reports, the EFCC told the Senate Committee on Drugs, Narcotics, Financial Crimes and Anti-Corruption in December 2013, "We (EFCC) have been complaining that no money has been released to us for operations. As of now, we don't have up to 2 million. If we can afford to pay salaries this month that is all." For an agency whose functions are defined by the number of arrest and prosecution of corrupt individuals across the country, how can those functions be effectively discharged without money for legal fees and travel expenses? How can they be motivated if salaries are not paid?

Interestingly, one of the other cases of corrupt practices the US report cited was the curious state pardon granted a former Bayelsa State governor, Diepriye Alamieyeseigha. Aside from his conviction for treasury looting and money laundering, Alaimieyeseigha, who is still a wanted person in the United Kingdom, served time in Nigeria also had his tenure as governor truncated, paving the way for Jonathan, then his deputy, to replace him. The state pardon implies that the former governor, who, was an ex-convict, could not occupy public office, whether appointive or elective, can now do so. Indeed, Jonathan has nominated him to the ongoing National Conference. That is a dangerous signal to the outside world for a government that professes commitment to fighting corruption.

In a similar damning report last year, the then USA Ambassador to Nigeria, Terence McCulley, reportedly told the Nigerian government to demonstrate more courage and conviction in its crusade against graft, insisting that it was the only way to “send a clear signal that the country is indeed committed to good governance, to the security of its citizens, and to its rightful place as a significant actor on the global stage”. Unfortunately, corruption has been identified as the major reason for the arrested development in the country. It is responsible for the arrested development in the country. It is responsible for reduced public spending, which results in huge infrastructure deficits, especially poor roads, lack of electricity, inadequately-equipped hospitals and low quality of education. It is also fingered in the pervasive insecurity in the country, low quality of governance and general poor standard of living.

Under the current administration, corruption has become particularly daring, even that any time before. Even when the president stated clearly his readiness to fight corruption, the government had been less than convicting in its manner of handling corruption cases. For instance, after ordering a series of probes into stolen oil subsidy money in which the country lost more than N2 trillion, an amount far in excess of Nigeria’s capital budget for this year, nobody has been convicted more than two years after.

Faced with brazen and self-evident corruption case in the purchase of two cars for N255 million for a former Aviation Minister, Stella Oduah, it still took the president four months to reluctantly fire her. He initially set up a committee to investigate a straightforward case, apparently to find a way to avoid sacking the minister. In addition, Alison-Madueke’s tenure as Petroleum Minister, which started in 2011, has been scarred by pains, controversies, sickening graft at the NNPC and

now, wantonness at the expense of a country in dire economic straits. The 2011 petro subsidy scandal, in which the parliament approved only N245 billion for payments, was the government spending N2.5 trillion, the protests that trailed the January 2012 petrol price hike and the subsequent investigations made it obvious that the government used the humongous amount to corruptly enrich Petroleum Ministry and the NNPC officials, staff of the petroleum subsidy agencies, marketers and cronies, through some of them have been undergoing lackluster prosecution since 2012.

Is it noteworthy that the government has been spending about N871.1 billion annually since then to offset petrol subsidy, showing that more than N 1trillion was plundered from the nation's coffers in 2011 alone on petrol subsidy under Alison-Madueke's watch. In 2012, the minister secured the approval of the parliament for a loan of \$1.6 billion to carry out Turn Around Maintenance of the nation's four refineries. Brimming with false excitement, she had promised that the refineries would function at 90 percent capacity after repairs. But the vest the facilities have averaged since then is a measly 22 percent.

Again, why did Nigeria's former Petroleum Minister, Alison-Madueke, just because the NNPC generates more than two-thirds of the country's external income, become so prodigal? Earlier this year, the nation groaned helplessly with the unveiling of the kerosene subsidy scandal, for which the NNPC has been deducting illegally from national revenues in spite of a presidential directive that stopped the subsidy in 2009. In February, the Senate uncovered how the corrupt oil corporation had been spending N 700 million daily to subsidize kerosene without the product reaching consumers who pay as much as N150 per litre, instead of the NNPC's N55 per litre.

In a normal environment, the aggregate of these misdeeds is enough to send a minister packing. In France, a former president, Nicolas Sarkozy, was tried for allegedly receiving money illegally to fund his party's campaign. Nigeria should also be a society where anybody, no matter how highly placed, is subject to our laws.

But, there is more, Sanusi, at a series of parliamentary hearings this year, listed wide-ranging fraudulent acts by the NNPC, the sum of which is that the rogue oil corporation has not remitted \$20billion of oil money it sold to the Federation Account. "It is established that of the \$67billion crude shipped by the NNPC between January 2012 and July 2012, \$47billion was remitted to the Federation Account. It is now up to the NNPC to produce proof that \$20 billion unremitted either

did not belong to the Federal or was legally and constitutionally spent,” Sanusi said. The NNPC, which Alison-Madueke supervises, has yet to give the nation satisfactory answers to these posers.

The NNPC has been swimming in a sleazy barter arrangement with some international companies over the 445,000 barrels of oil per day the government sets aside for domestic refining though the four refineries have the capacity to produce 22 percent.

Corruption has never been so brazen and sickening in the country as in recent times. Regularly, fresh nerve jangling allegations of venality in public office assault the citizens. Unfortunately, the parliament, as usual, may just make futile noise but this outrageous case, as many of such probes have been prematurely interred in its burial chamber.

The US report alleges that, in Nigeria, “Massive, widespread and pervasive corruption affected all levels of government and the security forces.” While alleging that judges were not left out of the massive corruption ring, the report accused the government of not implementing the law on corruption effectively, thus deliberately allowing “officials (to) frequently engage in corrupt practices with impunity.” These are, possibly, part of what the Speaker of the House of Representative, Aminu Tambuwal, and saw when he cried out that President’s “body language” encouraged corruption.

Indeed, the US report went far, but only to the extent of the period it covered, which was 2013. Since the beginning of 2017, there have been allegations of missing funds, meant for the Federation Account, and for further distribution among, federal, states and local governments. But, for alleging that about \$2 billion later \$20 billion – had not been accounted for, the Central Bank Governor, Lamido Sanusi, was placed on suspension and a forensic audit ordered later. Why the hurry in suspending CBN governor instead of investigating his allegations first? The government says the suspension will pave the way for the investigation of allegations of financial recklessness against the CBN governor.

Although both the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation and the government said only \$10.8 billion was unaccounted for, it is still a huge sum of money. Only a fraction of that money can build the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, the East-West Road and the Second Niger Bridge. It is

money that could have staved off the prolonged university teacher's strike that nearly cost the institutions a full academic session.

The Nigerian government owes the people a duty to tackle corruption boldly by adequately funding the EFCC and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission. Besides, corrupt individuals should never be allowed to go scot-free; that is the only way to stem the tide of impunity in the country.

If anyone needed to sound the bugle that Nigeria, the world's largest Black nation is on the verge of a looming precipice, the recent homily by US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton despite its somewhat undiplomatic nature will, suffice: "Nigeria is at the crossroads, and it is imperative that citizens be engaged and that civic organizations be involved in helping to chart the future of this great nation". She said. "A country that produces two million barrels of oil a day, has the seventh-largest natural gas reserves of any country in the world, but according to the United Nations, the poverty rate in Nigeria has gone up from 46percent to 76 percent over the last 13 years".

With life expectancy sliding to a meagre 43 years, infant mortality rising to one of the highest in the world and citizenry struggling to eke a living as they live mostly on 2\$ a day, meeting the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015 is mirage.

A drifting ship of state and mindless political elite that has funneled the country's wealth for its benefit and that of its courtiers strikes at the heart of its problem. Clinton put this starkly: "The most immediate source of the disconnect between Nigeria's wealth and its poverty is a failure of governance at the local, state and federal levels. And some of that is due, as you know so well, to corruption, others of it to lack of capacity or mismanagement".

The example of such financial recklessness could be gleaned from the eight years of President Olusegun Obasanjo where the three tiers of government shared more than N16 trillion, yet the budgets were only long in words but short in delivery.

The World Bank says the country which generated \$600 billion from oil in five decades, lost \$300 billion in the last three decades to corruption. The economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has put the amount lost to corruption and mismanagement in the last four

decades at \$400 billion, an amount estimated as the equivalent of 300 years of British aid to the development countries.

The raw material, 300 billion, and 2million barrels of oil- they're staggering. But they don't tell you how many hospitals and roads could have been built. They don't tell you how many schools could have opened, or how many more Nigerians could have attended college, or how many mothers might have survived childbirth if that money had been spend differently. The lack of transparency and accountability has eroded the legitimacy of the government and contributed to the rise of groups that embrace violence and reject the authority of the state.

A large chunk of the country's wealth is ending up in limousines, plum villas, fat foreign accounts and to whet the appetite of a mostly unproductive political elite which is not only resolved on a dialogue or the deaf but also driving the entire citizenry to fend for themselves on the streets. This is why the mushrooming of militia groups beyond these operating in the Niger Delta and Boko Haram has become real.

Infrastructure particularly roads remain largely impassible while electricity is epileptic. In spite of the \$16 billion spend on National Independent Power Project (NIPP) by the Obasanjo government, electricity generation has not gone beyond 2500 megawatts. There's fading hope that the projected 6000 megawatts by the government of President Umar Yar' Adua by December will be realized.

Industries are virtually in comatose as a result of the energy environment rendering millions jobless. The Manufacturing Association of Nigeria (MAN) said about 820 firm closed shop between 2000 to 2008, signaling a serious industrial crises.

As these factories are daily closing shop in Nigeria and moving to Ghana, Angola, Cote d' ivore and other countries in Africa where there are more friendly business climes, it makes fiddlesticks of our projection to generate massive jobs as encapsulated in the Nation Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS I&II). It also makes illusory our vision of raising per capita income to \$4000 and becoming one of the biggest and most resilient economies in the world by 2020.

Specifically, a public spirited organization, the Fund for Peace, in its Failed State Index (FSI) ranked Nigeria as the 14th vulnerable state that is prone to failure. From this it show that

Nigeria's potential for failure has grown progressively worse. This because when its present rating is compared with those of previous years. It seems the country is inching further to the brink of disaster. For Instance, in previous years, Nigeria's vulnerability to failure was ranked 17th in 2007, 15 in 2008 and 19th in 2009.

Significant of Study

The significance of this paper is to contrast Nigeria development trajectory with that of Indonesia, another third world country in Asia. Today, Indonesia's life expectancy is at 72 years (up from about 47 in 1960s), while Nigeria is today celebrating 52 years. Indonesia's GDP per capita income is twice that of Nigeria. It also has a much smaller percentage of its population living in poverty (20 percent), compared with Nigeria's 70 percent. Its primary school enrolment ratio is 99percent compared to Nigeria's 57.6 percent.

Under the Abacha-like Suharto, Indonesia focused on a number of key initiatives: Education, health, manufacturing for export, and agriculture. At independence in 1960, Nigeria was the world's leading producer and exporter of crude palm oil, with about 160,000 tonnes in production per annum. Today, Indonesia is the world's biggest producer, with about 27 million tonnes in 2013, and 2008 export revenues in excess of \$12bn. As for Nigeria, we're still struggling to produce about 900,000 tonnes per annum, and are today a net importer of (and dumping ground for) crude palm oil from countries like Indonesia.

Analysts have been trying to answer that riddle; of how two countries with very high level of corruption have had such different trajectories. Economist Paul Collier has it down in part to capital flight-the movement of money out of a country. "In a country like Indonesia, corrupt money was investment in the economy. In Nigeria, even honestly acquired money was sent of it," Collier has argued.

In other words, while both Nigerian and Indonesian leaders were looting their countries blind. Indonesians kept their money with their country, while Nigerian (like any African countries) ferried theirs to Switzerland and any number of tax havens around the world.

While on the surface, it looked like similar stories of corruption, the underlying effects were different, for two reasons. First, as Collier says, all those billions of dollars went into the economy as investment, creating economic value. Second Indonesia's leadership was obliged to create the conditions for their money to thrive. If you're going to keep your money at home then the least you can do is to, in the name of enlightened self-interest, so manage the economy in a way that ensures a conducive environment for your money. Had Ibrahim Babangida and Sani

Abacha and the rest of our billionaire ruling class kept all their money in Nigeria, they would have paid better attention to economic management and development.

Literature Review

This question of enlightened self-interest is a very important one. Its absence, from all the indication, is in the Nigeria DNA. Its absence explains why the wealthiest Nigerian are still dying abroad in droves, of cancers that their country's health system is unable to detect early.

National development and Electoral Transparency by themselves, elections do not constitute democracy. Yet a nation cannot be a democracy without genuine elections.

If Nigeria is to mature as a democracy, we must improve our electoral system. Today, those who control the system manipulate elections with such impunity that they now see misconduct without sanction as a normal way of life.

A look at the recent controversy surrounding election of the Nigerian Governor Forum (NGF) chairman. Thirty-five state governors assembled to vote for the chairmanship.

They did this among themselves by secret ballot. One contestant earned 19 votes. The other attracted 16, in a place where honesty matters, the result would be clear and undisputed. But not in today's Nigeria under the current leadership. The chap who earned fewer votes was declared the winner by those who backed him. In Nigeria, the tenets of basic arithmetic have little application concerning elections. Votes do not count, they are concocted.

Elections are not necessarily won by the candidate with the highest votes. Elections are won by the candidate of the powerful and mighty. Consequently, a group comprising all the nations' governors could not even conduct a simple 35 person election without a disputed outcome.

This little episode would be laughable if it were an isolated incident. However, it is emblematic of a larger, more troubling pattern that portends calamity if not arrested. With this recent experience. Those in power would go and the means they would employ to manipulate results when the battleground is the entire nation and the stakes are the general elections in 2015. The NGF debacle symbolizes a disclaim for democracy and the popular will. If we are to save Nigeria, we must rescue the electoral process from its abusers.

In the main, elections during the current Fourth Republic have been substandard. They remind us that though democratic governance is inherently civilian, civilian government is not necessarily democratic. Again, one of the most important recommendations of the Uwais Committee was that of employing modern technology for registration and voting. This is to improve the integrity of our elections. We must embrace that technology now, we need a fully bio-metric voter registration and balloting system.

The lack of a functional Biometric Voters Registration (BVR) System accounts for much of the abuse of the current process. The debate over BVR goes to the fundamental quality of our elections. With BVR we have a chance in at home elections. Without it, we are doomed to repeat past failures. This system was applied in Ghana. It worked. Other African countries – Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Tanzania- used biometric registers and validation system for their general elections. It worked. If Nigeria truly is the leader and giant of Africa, let us act like it.

If smaller nations can take this step to assume the continental lead in the quality and integrity of their electoral processes, let us regain the leadership role by taking the necessary step to embrace this system as well. The objective of the data capture and finger printing is to eliminate multiple voting. However, INEC's present system negates this. Why take fingerprints, capture biometric data and then discard the information on the all-important voting day by resorting to manual accreditation? Unless INEC, embraces biometric verification and revalidating during the exercise, our elections will remain more an exercise in deception and subterfuge than in democracy and probity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted secondary data approach base on materials used sourced from past and present descriptive literature including publications from newspaper, magazines, and the internet.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The imperatives of Democracy in Nigeria and Africa

In order to resolve Nigeria development crises, it is important to stress the link between political stability and economic development. Political stability will create the enabling environment for political development. We venture to argue that democracy holds the key to political stability

hence economic development of Nigeria and the African continent. Democracy is about people ruling themselves, managing their own affairs without undue restrictions or in the famous words of “Abraham Lincoln” government of the people, by the people and for the people”. Gitonga suggest that democracy can be experienced at three levels of social existence, the material or infrastructure level; the institutional or techno-structural level and the human relations or super structural level.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the infrastructure level democracy is about the economy, the system of production, distribution and consumption of goods and services in a free market enterprise, which ensure meeting the basic needs of the people. These needs include among other things food, clothing and shelter; the security needs of freedom from danger, fear and anxiety; the identity needs for accomplishments.

At its institutional level, democratization relates to the types of institutions and the mechanisms for ensuring that democracy functions will in a given society. Three factors are important for ensuring that governance system meets the democratic ideal. First there has to be freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom choice of whoever they want to represent them. Second it must not be difficult to operate or manage so as to make it easily understood by the people. Third the role of each of its institutions or organs must be unambiguous as to their authority, power and influence. This will ensure checks and balances in the system.

At the super structural level, democratization relates to values, beliefs and attitude of individuals. People must be made to realize the importance of equality, freedom and human dignity as well as of fairness and justice in their day-to-day interactions with others.

The imperative of democracy in Nigeria is the emphasis it places on dialogue, negotiation and consensus building in dealing with problems. The frequent recourse to armed intervention or display of coercive power in the resolution of disputes between countries or between component ethnic checks and social groups within country cannot bring stability in the continent.

Democracy has prospect for sustainable development in Nigeria and Africa.

Ake (1996) commented thus the most decisive issue in Africa today is the prospects of democracy. Democracy is not mere desirable, it is necessary. It will not solve all the problems of Africa, but none of her major problems can be solved without it. Democracy carried the prospect of emancipator struggle begun in colonial time and the possibility of Africa's deliverance from a ruling which has dishonored our past and fashioned a present which promises not future except more pain and shame. Democracy will empower the ordinary people conditions for much delayed development project to take-off. In this paper we have seen the crises of development in Nigeria and Africa from the colonial and post-colonial periods. The crises can only be resolved through the democratic option. This will ensure rule of law and good governance that meet the needs and aspirations of the people.

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