

A PHILOSOPHICAL INTERROGATION OF CORRUPTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Corruption gives birth to challenges such as electoral fraud, the looting of a country's national treasury, election rigging, weak government institutions, poverty, hunger, poor healthcare system, poor road network, poor legal framework, lack of affordable water supply, low life expectancy, poor economic programmes, godfatherism, elite regimes, crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, youth restiveness, brain drain syndrome, internet fraud, socio-economic, moral, physical and political insecurity such as political assassination, political thuggery, gangsterism, poor tax system, poor communication system, poor education system, lack of due process or rule of law, low productivity level, poor power supply and irresponsible leadership. Corruption is a global phenomenon and it is as old as humanity. Nigeria as a country is deeply rooted in corrupt practices. Corruption is pathological because it is like a disease. Corruption has a destructive force. The objective of this paper is to reveal that corruption is against humanity and country's quest for sustainable national development. This paper adopts the analytical framework in discussing the implications of corruption to Nigeria. The findings, however, show that the eradication of corruption is onerous task. It requires a collective effort of a people to stem the tide of corrupt practices. Rapid structural changes are required to mitigate the evils of corruption in Nigeria such as overhauling Nigeria's legal system and weak government institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and other related matters Commission (ICPC).

Keywords: Corruption, corrupt practices, Nigeria, responsible leadership, society

INTRODUCTION

The malaise of corruption has more or less become endemic in a nation like Nigeria. There is no gainsaying that corruption flows in the veins of many Nigerians. Many Nigerians see corruption as normal and as a norm in their daily routine. When a person is not prone to corruption he or she is being regarded as not being smart and sensible. Corrupt practices have been closely associated with tribal sentiments because when a particular leader occupies a political office, tribal men or kinsmen expect him or her to use the opportunity to loot the national treasury or resources of the country. Today, Nigeria is suffering from economic stagnation. Unfortunately, such corrupt mentality is a very pitiable and pathetic one. However, some Nigerian politicians that are considered as corrupt are not duly punished by the laws due to weak legal system, bribery and corruption, lack of due process, or rule of law. Corruption has a social, economic, political, ethical, and psychological. In a well-organized society, people that are convicted as corrupt are usually stigmatized and this can serve as a deterrent to others. But this is not the case in contemporary Nigerian society. Unfortunately, convicted political leaders move freely in Nigerian society and they even participate in the Nigerian political space. Some of them are members of parliament and this is a shame. Corruption discourages the tendency for a people

oriented programmes and the common good. For Innocent Asouzu (2004, 382), the common good as the basic anthropological constant is deeply rooted in a relational dimension. Corruption serves as a form of a social disconnect between the Nigerian leaders and the Nigerian masses.

In analyzing the problem of corruption, this paper is divided into five sections. Section one is the introductory remarks. Section two focuses on the conceptual clarification of corruption. Section three discusses the antithesis between corruption and development. Section four hinges on the correlation between corruption, godfatherism and elite regimes in Nigeria's socio-economic and political development. Section five is the concluding considerations. This paper concludes that corruption leads to harsh economic policies. It destroys the socio-economic and political structure of a country and must in turn be destroyed if the nation is to move any inch forward.

CORRUPTION: CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The concept of corruption has a definitional difficulty. There is no universally acceptable definition of corruption. Accordingly, Godwin Okaneme (2018, 10), asserts that to define corruption is indeed an uncommon task as it has generated so much interest and inquiry thus throwing up an array or plethora of literature in the intellectual world. In addition to the foregoing, corruption is a social practice that tends to destroy the collective integrity of a society or a person. It is mainly all about taking advantage of public resources. Corruption has various dimensions. It could be in form of cash or being kind to a person. Corruption could be in a form of gratification. Corruption has negative implications because it could destroy the socio-economic and political structure of a country. However, corruption has psychological, social, political, educational, legal, moral and global implications. It is a concern about the moral question of individual members of a society.

For Chris Okoli (2010, 58) corruption is a moral question which the individual member of society, working on his own or in concert with other agents in society, answers to the detriment of his neighbours and society in breach of the golden rule “do unto others as you would like them to do unto you”. Corruption is an evil and illegal act or practice that is not backed by law. Law is rational while corruption is an irrational act carried out by a person or a society. In other words, law and corruption are two concepts that are antithetical. Corruption hinders a country's quest for sustainable national development. However, corruption and development are antithetical because corruption hinders the improvement of human lives while development aids the improvement of human life. Corruption is against humanity while development supports human betterment. Corruption is simply the subordination of public interest to private interest. Based on this subscription, Subrata Murkherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy (2011, 144-145) succinctly argued that societies that were corrupt excluded the common people from playing an active role in government and political life.

CORRUPTION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Corruption has led to a serious economic hardship, poverty and hunger in Nigeria. Corruption is antithetical to Nigeria's sustainable national development. Development is deeply rooted in the attainment of economic growth but it goes beyond the premises of economic growth. Development is one of the crucial elements of democratic stabilization and economic liberalization. Paulinus Ejeh (2021, 183) argues that development is very essential and highly necessary to a country's economic growth. For Andrew Efemini (2010, 59-60), development is inextricably linked with human rights. The notion of politics in the state revolves around the need for the promotion of human rights. For Anikpe Mbah (2016, 21), the term development could be used interchangeably with evolution depending on the contexts in which it is being used, either positively or negatively to refer to situations, trends, or issues. It is clear that development and improvement are synonymous.

Broadly speaking, development revolves around the improvement of human welfare, needs and aspirations. On the other hand, corruption discourages the overall interest of the people. In other words, corrupt practices serve as impediment to Nigerian development. For Paulinus Ejeh (2021, 190), development equally implies improvement in the material well-being of all citizens in society. Development demands that poverty and inequality to access the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. Development in all its entirety revolves around human development programmes. However, development is deeply rooted in human-centeredness. For Philip Isanbor and Anthony Bature (2018, 64), the quest for development, more ultimately for the realization of integral human development is the presupposition for the acceptance of change, and it takes of great trust of moral evaluation to monitor the wave of any possible change. Accordingly, Godwin Okaneme (2016, 31-32) argues that development itself is also a human activity that ensures that nations are not stagnated but make steady and verifiable progress in all facets of human endeavours. For Nnaemedo Bartholomew (2023, 345), development means translating from potentiality to actuality, manifesting and bringing out from hiddenness to perceptibility.

On the other hand, Izu Onyechoa (2020, 2) argues that development can mean at least three things, 1) a process by which an inner principle that is at first hidden comes to light; 2) it may be a slow, step by step transformation; 3) it may be a transformation that is guided in a definite direction; 4) it can be a transformation that leads from the unformed and less determined to the formed and fully determined. Development in Nigeria is bedeviled by corrupt practices and it serves as an impediment to human progress. Development is all about human progress. For Chuka Enuke (2006, 76), development is seen as that which involves the progress of a people in society. Unfortunately, the socio-political and economic prosperity of the Nigerian people has been truncated by the evils of corruption. Nigeria's quest for sustainable national development has always been threatened by corruption; and the problem of corruption has become so endemic and systemic in contemporary Nigerian society. Paulinus Ejeh (2021, 192), argues that national development is described as the overall or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country.

Nonetheless, national development is holistic in nature and revolves around the cultural, social, political, economic, scientific, technological, and educational advancement of a people. National development reflects on humanistic and holistic principles of ensuring the welfare, improvement and the betterment of a people. However, sustainable national development is feasible, indispensable and; it is driven by effective, visionary and responsible leadership. Unfortunately, responsible leadership is lacking in Nigeria; and this has actually led to poor development indices such as low life expectancy, low per capita income, poor infrastructural facilities, poor road network, environmental degradation, lack of affordable water supply, epileptic power supply, poor health care system, poor tax system, poor economic/market system, poor education system, unemployment, low productivity level, subsistent agriculture, poor communication system, poor governance, weak government institutions, poor legal framework, brain drain syndrome, increase in crime rates and corruption. In other words, responsible leadership remains indispensable ingredient for Nigeria's national development.

Unfortunately, development in Nigeria is in a sorry state; it is in a very pitiable and pathetic condition. Unfortunately, the socio-political and economic development of Nigeria is in a state of shambles. For Paulinus Ejeh (2021, 183), sustainable development can only be possible when the leadership of the country is driven by responsible leadership imbued with democratic transparency and accountability. However, corrupt practices have led to political insecurity. For Gbari Sylvester and Anselm Odo (2021, 202), political insecurity has resulted in violent and desperate politickings among political parties, electoral fraud, election rigging, thuggery, and money politics. Electoral fraud poses a major threat to democracy in Nigeria and by implication,

a threat to the national security of Nigeria. Gbari Sylvester and Anselm Odo (2021, 203) argued that ethno-religious crisis has led to inter-tribal conflicts. Emmanuel Ebo (2009, 559) argues that Nigeria's democracy has been over buffeted by conflicts of interest. Nigerian politicians must address the national issues that may lead to crisis of poverty, socio-political, economic and moral insecurity, poor infrastructural facilities in order to guarantee an equitable distribution of same.

Moreover, the persistence of corrupt practices in Nigeria's quest for sustainable national development has led to a serious economic insecurity. Gbari Sylvester and Anselm Odo (2021, 204) therefore assert that economic insecurity has resulted to the crisis of resource control, poverty, hunger, shortage of food, environmental degradation, destruction of live stocks, fishes and marine life. All these socio-political and economic problems serve as major drawbacks to Nigeria's quest for sustainable national development. Nigeria's quest for sustainable national development is also bedeviled by environmental degradation. Environmental degradation has ravaged Nigeria's quest for sustainable development. However, development in contemporary Nigerian society is nothing to write good report of. Paulinus Ejeh (2021, 180), argues that the pride of any country has been and will continue to be the attainment of higher level of human and socio-economic and political development of a people.

Certainly, responsible leadership and governance in Nigeria require political will and ideological direction. For Leon Baradat (2008, 6-7), ideology is human-centred. Nigerian political leadership lacks an ideological direction and political will; the goodwill that will turn around the socio-economic prosperity of Nigeria. For Innocent Asouzu (2003, 159-163), only the man of goodwill can submit himself to a higher form of legitimization. It is as men of goodwill that we can be truly human and compassionate. Nigerian political leadership requires humane and compassionate and ethical considerations. Unfortunately, Nigerian political leadership is deeply rooted in corruption, dictatorship, heartlessness, inhumanity. This rootedness is antithetical to national development and the economic sustainability of any country. Corruption is against our humanity and the collective interests of a people. Corruption has destructive force and antihuman and it has served as cog in the wheel of Nigeria's quest for sustainable national development. According to Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010, 29), corruption reigns supreme in elitist regimes as the allocation of state's resources are for the benefit of the mighty that is the ruling class at the expense of the ruled in Nigeria. For Subrata Murkherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy (2011, 144), corruption means the subordination of public values to the private sphere. Corruption is when the public sphere was used to furthering private aims and interests. For Chris Okoli (2010, 59), Nigeria's embrace and romance with corruption amazed the world. Accordingly, Paulinus Ejeh (2021, 181) argues that Nigeria and other less developed countries of the world have continuously wallowed in the swampy and muddy waters of urban overpopulation, rural stagnation, acute unemployment and growing man-made inequalities.

Worthy of note is that African leaders fear such a situation due to the evils of corruption and inordinate ambition. Denis Venter (2004, 229-230), argues that the emphasis on 'governance' is designed to address the corrupt, capricious and arbitrary practices, which seem to afflict Africa's politicians and bureaucrats. Efforts to create an economically enabling environment and build administrative and other capacities will be wasted if the political context is not favourable; ultimately, better governance requires political renewal and a concerted attack on corruption. However, corrupt practices could act as impetus for slow pace for sustainable national development in Nigeria. However, corruption and elite politics are the major threats to Nigeria's quest for sustainable national development.

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN CORRUPTION AND GODFATHERISM IN NIGERIA'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

There is inextricable nexus between corruption and Godfatherism in Nigerian socio-economic and political development. Corrupt practices have led to the crises of democratic accountability; and it remains one of the hindrances of a robust democratic stabilization and economic liberalization. For Maduabuchi Dukor (2004, v), one of the political headaches of democracy in Nigeria today is the crisis of godfatherism. The discontent in this apparently valued conception of godhead in a secular world, historically and diachronically translated to the social and political relations, has lifted the veil on the phenomenon of its pathology in the pilot of the ship of the state at micro and macro level. The fact is that it is all about phenomena poses the empirical and analytical challenge to make an adventure into noumenal reality in the search for a solution to a political problem that has evaded the cynosure of some constitutions.

Maduabuchi Dukor (2004, v-vi) therefore, argues that philosophers from Socrates to the contemporary times may not have spent handsome time thinking about the problem of godfatherism in republics and democracies, but beneath the substratum of their thoughts are underlining principle that would preempt an irregular, mutant and aberrant godfatherist politics. Corruption gives room for Godfatherist politics in Nigeria. Maduabuchi Dukor (2004, vii-viii) argues that there is nothing intrinsically retrogressive in the art of godfatherism, and the problem inherent in it is only psychological, social, moral or extrinsic. For Ekiyor Henry, (2004, 27), Nigerian democracy is fragile and it can easily be aborted, distorted, hijacked by dictators and destroyed. In view of this it must be handled with care. For Ekiyor Henry (2004, 29), democracy takes many years to be nursed and nurtured to sustainable democracy. The electorates must play the role of a watchdog for its survival in any nation.

Broadly speaking, paternalism has resulted in the erosion of Nigerian democracy. However, the patron-client relationship tends to encourage political corruption in Nigeria. For Kehinde Coker (2004, 37), godfatherism in Nigerian politics has become a social problem, which has ravaged and permeated the entire blood stream of the political system negatively. For Danoye Oguntola-Laguda (2004, 43), in recent times, Nigerian nascent democracy has been plagued by many problems such as the systemic and endemic problem of corruption. However, some of the problems of godfatherism and elite politics include incessant corruption among government officials, political assassination, political thuggery, abduction, kidnapping etc. these problems portend great danger to the future of democracy and national development in Nigeria. On the other hand, Christopher Ukhun (2004, 83) argues that godfatherism is a global phenomenon.

Moreover, it is common knowledge that part of the driving force of the United States of America's polity is the Godfather concept. In Godfather phenomenon, there is a psychological factor or perpetual neurosis of which recipients of Godfather's largesse are victims. It is a neurosis of socio-political and economic insecurity, powerlessness and dependence. Christopher Ukhun (2004, 82) argues that the Godfather expects the godson to exhibit a slave mentality of complete obedience; he must have cowardly, subservient and beggarly disposition and which must be well developed if the godson must enjoy or continues to enjoy the favour which flows out of the Godfather's strength and power. Christopher Ukhun (2004, 87) further heightened his theoretical position by arguing that the Godfathers have ensured the selfish disintegration, bastardization and trivialization of electoral process. Elections have not been free and fair in Nigeria. Godtherism remains one of the offshoots of corruption. In addition to the foregoing, corruption reigns supreme in any godfatherism and elite regimes. Elite politics has led to money politics in Nigeria. For Eribo and Matthew Izibili (2010, 22), a cursory look at the Nigerian politics reveals that politics is in shambles, logjam and quagmire, therefore, it's nothing to write good report of. The political situation is very much critical: people go into politics only to loot the national treasury, money politics reigns prominently in Nigerian politics. Power tousle, bribery and

corruption, assassination everywhere, gangsterism, and even in religious arena, religious bigotry reigns supreme. All these have become the stock in trade in Nigerian body polity: just because of the political structure that is circumscribed by corrupt practices and elite regimes.

Corrupt practices in contemporary Nigerian society have led to abject poverty and hunger. There is hunger in the Nigerian political environment due to endemic corruption. Godwin Okaneme (2018, 4) argues that poverty means being of a low or inferior standard or quality. Poverty, therefore, connotes a general scarcity or the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money. Wangari Maathai (2009, 114-115) argues that as long as African politicians are pressured by their constituencies—parliamentary or ethnic—to remain in the government whether they win elections or not, because the people believe the politicians will provide them with patronage. And as long as politicians continue to supply these gifts, handouts and favours, then any system of governance will be broken.

The crux of this paper is that corruption just like the “godfatherist complex” is a global phenomenon. Nigerian political development should be premised on the principles of communitarian consensus whereby everybody has a sense of belonging. Godfatherism in Nigerian democratic community has led to an endemic corruption and the culture of wastage. Corruption means taking precedence of private interest over public interest. For Chris Okoli (2010, 59-60), corruption is as old as human history and has affected and decimated society down the line to some degree, not sparing institutions. Regrettably, corruption in Nigeria is all pervading, endemic and systemic. For Subrata Murkherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy (2011, 144-145), corruption meant licence, violence, great inequities in wealth and power, lack of peace and justice, disorderly ambition, and growth, lawlessness, dishonesty and contempt for religion. It meant the subordination of public values to the private sphere or/and when the public sphere was used for furthering private aims and interests. Corruption could be tackled only with extraordinary measures.

The prevalence of corruption in contemporary Nigerian society could lead to harsh economic policies that could destroy the substructure and superstructure of Nigeria; it could lead to a violent disruption, social disorderliness or civil disobedience and social vices. On August 1, 2024 the Nigerian people embarked on a nationwide peaceful protest in order for them to express their grievances of the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration that has inflicted so much hardship on the Nigerian peoples within just less than one year in office. The sudden increase in the price of the premium motor spirit (PMS) or petrol has caused an untold economic hardship on the majority of Nigerians. Poverty and hunger has become worsened due to the sudden increase in the price of premium motor spirit. Prices of goods and services have skyrocketed therefore causing so much economic hardship. One fundamental problem that is closely associated with Nigeria's quest for sustainable national development is harsh economic policies or policy somersault. One thing that is so glaring is that corruption leads to underdevelopment of a country or continent. In addition to the foregoing, the central thesis of this theoretical discourse is that corruption as an illegal act demands ethical considerations; and it is evil, destructive and counterproductive and ought to be outrightly discouraged in every facets of human society.

INTERROGATING THE CONCEPT OF CORRUPTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIA

Corruption has grossly ravaged Nigeria and her socio-economic, educational and political structures have collapsed like a pack of cards. Corruption has been one of the sources of debasement to Nigeria as a country coupled with poor governance structure or ineffective or irresponsible leadership. The problem of corruption in Nigerian has led to other myriad of fundamental challenges such as irregular power supply, poor environmental sustainability, lack of affordable water supply, weak government institutions, poor legal system, weak police force,

police brutality, poor governance structure, poverty, hunger, low level of productivity output, poor tax system, poor infrastructures, socio-economic, moral and political insecurity, armed robbery, political thuggery, political assassination, electoral fraud, election rigging, lack of due process and rule of law, social unrest or civil disobedience (protest) and brain drain syndrome.

For Maduabuchi Dukor (2010, 115), the concept of 'brain drain' is a malignant cancer plaguing post independent Black Africa. By definition, brain drain is the continuing loss of professional citizens of high intelligence and creativity through emigration. This phenomenon has assumed an alarming proportion causally related to the widespread and endemic cancer of political instability and economic mismanagement. The occurrence of protest in the Nigerian political space is now becoming a new trend. It therefore, shows that Nigerians are becoming very sensitive to resist any unjust government. The end-SARS saga of 2020 and the current nationwide protest of 1st August, 2024 is an eye opener that the Nigerian government should begin to do what is right to avoid the breakdown of law and order among the Nigerian citizenry. The ongoing protest that started on August 4, 2024, is as a result of endemic, systemic and political corruption in Nigeria. J. Obi Oguejiofor (2009, 22) argues that the level of corruption in Nigeria has reached such an alarming state if it persists at that level, it is well nigh impossible to obtain functional democracy in the country.

Furthermore, corruption in Nigeria has not only led to lack of functional democracy but lack of functional education. For Adegbite Ibrahim (2020, 145), functional education is any educational programme that is capable of providing a positive output in any learner in any nation. However, corruption in Nigeria has led to the inadequacy of law and Nigerian politicians behave the way they like because the legal system in Nigeria is weak and ineffective. Based on this subscription, J. Obi Oguejiofor (2009, 23), asserts that a situation of where the law is inadequate gives a completely unfair advantage to the ruling party or the holders of political office. Accordingly, J. Obi Oguejiofor (2009, 22) argues that it is interesting to observe how corruption in Nigeria has grown among public office holders, especially politicians. Corruption among national assembly members is quite unimaginable. J. Obi Oguejiofor (2009, 24) further heightened his theoretical position by arguing that the incomprehensible loss of running our democratic government at the level of National Assembly is adequately matched if not surpassed by the corruption, and profligacy of our executive Governors. Nigerian democracy has failed woefully due to the evils of corruption. For J. Obi Oguejiofor (2009, 25), if corruption is treated with levity and as a generally accepted *modus vivendi* in our democracy; it goes without saying that serious negative effects will follow from it. Accordingly, J. Obi Oguejiofor (2009, 26-27) argues that again the increasing corruption in Nigeria helps to raise the level of insecurity. In the atmosphere of corruption, law enforcement agents are completely inefficient. The result is serious insecurity to life and property... unless the level of corruption is drastically reduced in the polity, there is very slim hope that our democracy will deliver the expected results. Nigerian democracy is built on secrecy. According to Maduabuchi Dukor (2009, 106), secrecy breeds corruptions of all hues and shades.

CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

So far, this paper has critically interrogated the evils of corruption and its implications for Nigeria and now concludes that corruption leads to harsh economic policies that can destroy the socio-economic and political structure of a society. Corruption paves the way for a myriad of socio-economic, education and political challenges such as electoral fraud, the looting of a country's national treasury, election rigging, weak government institutions, poverty, hunger, poor healthcare system, poor road network, poor legal framework, lack of affordable water supply, low life expectancy, poor economic system, godfatherism, elitist regimes, crimes and other social vices such as kidnapping, armed robbery, youth restiveness, internet fraud, socio-economic,

moral, physical and political insecurity such as political assassination, political thuggery, gangsterism, poor tax system, brain drain syndrome, poor communication system, poor education system, lack of due process or rule of law, low productivity level, poor power supply and irresponsible leadership. Today, Nigeria is suffering from economic stagnation due to the evils of corruption. Unfortunately, some Nigerian politicians that are considered as corrupt are not duly punished by the law due to weak legal system, bribery and corruption, lack of due process, or rule of law. Nevertheless, we are all witnesses to the wrecking social, economic, political, ethical, and psychological implications of corruption. In a well-organized society, people that are convicted as corrupt are usually stigmatized and this can serve as a deterrent to others. Corruption—this malignant tumor that threatens the very survival of Nigeria as a nation—must be excised if we must move forward. Otherwise, we are headed for doom.

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