

NIGERIA: CORRUPTION ARISING FROM BAD LEADERSHIP

*Anthony Eniayejuni,
Nusret Sinan Evcan*

International Relations Department, Cyprus International University

Abstract

In Nigeria, Corruption has become the normal routine of successive government. The increasing rate of corruption is intrinsically interwoven with leadership problem. Since the early days of independence, the successive leaders have performed below expectation; they have been more concerned with accumulation of wealth rather than development of the country. Considering the large amount of human and natural resources, and the unlimited opportunities and possibilities that abound in the country, instead of bringing the much needed development and building institutions that will improve the lives of the people, these leaders have succeeded in exploiting and impoverishing the masses and have caused a colossal waste of natural and human resource. This paper argued that one of the factor that enhances and encourages corruption in Nigeria is lack of good and sincere leadership

Keywords: Corruption, Leadership problem, good governance

Introduction

Corruption has been universally acknowledge as one of the causes of underdevelopment, poverty, low political and economic growth, decay of infrastructure and accumulation of large domestic and external debts. Corruption set away nations from achieving public good and improving the standard of living of its citizens. Corruption retard democratic growth, prevent domestic and foreign investment, create unemployment, infrastructure deficit and slows down economic growth of a nation. Any forms of corruption constitute a cancer that can destroy any hope for rapid political and economic development. Corruption leads to loss of confidence, legitimacy and decrease the standard of government services and infrastructure, thereby affecting the quality of life of the people.

Corruption occurs in many forms or guises which includes Political, Bureaucratic, Nepotism, Kickback, Bribery, Patronage and Electoral

corruption. Political corruption is use of political office by public office holders to acquire and accumulate wealth for personal and private gains (Umeadi, 2008). Bureaucratic corruption can be explained as an inappropriate procedure of obtaining a business or contract from the government (Ovienloba, 2007). Embezzlement is outright theft of government or private entrusted funds. Nepotism is an act by which politician or civil servant gives a job or favours his relative rather than a qualified applicant. Kickback is when government official use their discretion in awarding contracts to an organization that is not the best bidder, or allocating more than what they deserve in order to obtain a fee for arranging the contract. Bribery is the reward given to influence the action of a public office holder in discharging his duties. Patronage is the usage of public resources to compensate individuals for their support during the election period. Electoral corruption is the act of illegal interference in the electoral process. Electoral corruption occurs in form of vote rigging, ballot stuffing, intimidation and purchase of election votes. Electoral corruption subverts the democratic principle by denying the masses political authority or sovereignty to elect representatives of their choice. All these form of Corruption has become the normal routine of successive government in Nigeria, due to the unproductive and dependent character of the leaders which has come to rely on the government and the stealing of public funds as easiest avenue to accumulate wealth. (Ernest, 2003).

Nigeria past leaders has entrenched corruption into the fabric of the society. They have failed to unite, organize and take the advantage of natural resources to make life better for all Nigerians, instead embezzlement of public funds, pervasive bribery and corruption is now the order of the day (Adewale, 2009). This paper argued that one of the factor that enhances and encourages corruption in Nigeria is lack of good and sincere leadership

Explaining the dark-side of leadership:

The success of an organization, political system or a nation depends on the ability of its leader to govern and manage its affairs. Just as the success of a sea voyage depends on the alertness, skill, determination and commitment of the ship's captain and also an air journey depends on the same qualities of a pilot (Bamidele, 2001). The operation of any organizational system, politically, economically and socially rests squarely on the type of leadership it had, virtually in all human endeavours, leadership is pivot. Leadership stands as the most crucial factor in the governance and management of any political system or a nation. Adolphus Wabara asserted that:

‘Leadership is a critical factor which makes the difference in the world. And that it was not enough to have abundant natural

resources, good climate, brilliant and talented people, but there must be leadership to pull all the resources together in the right and proper mix to achieve the desired goals and objectives.’ He explained further that service was the essence of leadership but not avenue to feather one’s nest (Aka, 2010).

The ability to take decision that would benefit the generality of the people requires a leader with a combination of charisma, integrity and accountability, as well as expertise in coordinating public affairs and government dealings. Leaders must lead the people in the right direction in order for them to achieve their various goals and ambitions. Leaders must be tolerant, reliable and of impeccable characters who are ready to serve and not to be served, and who always ready to give opportunities to others to make their contributions towards the overall development of the nation.

The leadership of military regimes that ruled Nigeria for so long has wiped out all attempts that could have led to value based leadership. The intervention of the military into governance in Nigeria have destroy almost all the values of the nation, by throwing the country’s constitution to the winds, looting the treasury and change the course of Nigerian history for worse through their divisive tactics, corruption, greed and brutality, and they successfully established and perpetuated the practice of responsibility without accountability in almost every facet of their activities. Olusegun Obasanjo said that:

One of the greatest tragedies of military rule in recent times is that corruption was allowed to grow unchallenged, and unchecked, even when it was glaring for everybody to see. The rules and regulations for doing official business were deliberately ignored, set aside or by-passed to facilitate corrupt practices. (BBC, 1999).

In the mid-1970, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) increases the price of oil, bringing enormous wealth and making Nigeria a net exporter of petroleum. Along with this major monetary windfall came relatively high levels of corruption and public malfeasance. Since this windfall, corruption had become the most pervasive and economically destructive enterprise in Nigeria. The military and other politically dominant group continued to enrich themselves through corrupt means, while most Nigerians continued to wallow in poverty and deprivation (Mbaku, 2007). In 1993, attempt was made by Abacha’s government to convince Nigerians of rectitude and accountability. In his early days as the head of state, he set up a panel headed by Dr Pius Okigbo on the 15th of January 1994 for the Reorganization and Reformation of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), and to probe how 12.4 billion dollars tagged ‘oil windfall’ that Nigerian government accrue in 1991 from the sale of excess crude oil brought by the Gulf war was spent by the previous regime (ThisDay Live,

2011). Their reports submitted on 27th September 1994, revealed that Babangida's government connived with some top officials of CBN using dedicated accounts that were not available to auditors to squander 12.2 billion dollars out of 12.4 billion dollars on dubious and unclear projects that could not be traced (Sahara Reporters, 2010).

Due to decades of economic mismanagement by successive government, there has been widespread of corruption in the society. Despite Nigeria return to democratic rule in 1999, the elected political office holders still sound and act very much like the dictators of the past. These public officers appear impatient with democracy and continue to see state power and governance as an avenue for rapid wealth accumulation. On the 19th of August 2013, an anti-corruption group known as Crusader for Good Governance wrote a petition to the EFCC demanding the investigation of the Minister for Petroleum Resources, Mrs Diezani Alison-Madueke for squandering millions of dollars of public funds to rent private jets for personal trips within and outside the country. The group said, since her appointment as the Minister for Petroleum Resources in 2010, she has spent more than 4 billion naira on chartered private jets and maintenance of aircraft (Sahara Reporters, 2013). In the course of the probe into the alleged scandal, the House Committee on Public Account said it uncovered three private jets that were in use by the Minister and that in the last two years she had spent 10 billion naira on these chartered jets (Punch Newspaper, 2014). However, the embattled Minister went to the court to obtain a judicial order restraining the House Committee on Public Account from investigating her use of 10 billion naira on chartered jets and from requesting her to provide documents or evidence relating to the jet scandal (Premium Times, 2014).

On the 25th of September 2013, a letter was written by Lamido Sanusi the former CBN governor to the president Goodluck Jonathan alleging that the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) had failed to remit the sum of 48.9 billion dollars representing 76% of the value of crude oil lifting between January 2012 and July 2013 to the federation account. The former CBN governor said for all crude oil sales between January 2012 and July 2013, NNPC only remitted 24% into the federation account and that the remaining 76% had been systematically diverted (Premium Times, 2013). He further stated that continue failure of NNPC to repatriate significant proportions of the proceeds of crude oil shipments made it a gross violation of the law (ThisDay Live, 2014). However, the NNPC refuted the report credited to former CBN governor that it diverted the said amount, adding that the allegation was borne out of misunderstanding of the workings of the oil and gas industry and modality for remitting crude oil sales revenue to federation account (AllAfrica Newspaper, 2013). The NNPC said it had remitted its oil sale proceeds but the missing funds should come from other

government departments who are responsible for petroleum tax and royalties, while other funds will have been spent on field development (Reuters, 2013). Following NNPC's repeated denials, a joint conference was convened on 18th of December 2013 consisting of Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; Minister of Petroleum Resources, Mrs. Diezani Alison-Madueke; former CBN governor, Lamido Sanusi and other revenue agencies of the federal government. At the conference it was revealed that a reconciliation process was ongoing, and had so far established that it was not 49.8 billion dollars that had not been repatriated to the federation account by NNPC but 10.8 billion dollars. During the press conference, Lamido Sanusi attempted to distance himself from the statements made by both Minister of Finance and Minister of Petroleum Resources (ThisDay Live, 2014). Sanusi later revealed that he agreed to the joint press conference just to calm nerves and to avert major crises (Sahara Reporters, 2014). However, the said amount 10.8 billion dollars still remain an issue and is yet to be accounted for.

All these corrupt practices among politicians and public office holders have become a legitimate part of their survival strategies. During the sensitization lecture on corruption at the Federal College of Forestry, Jos; Emmanuel Ayoola said that Nigeria has lost more than \$300 billion to corrupt leaders since independent and that the said amount could have made lives much better for ordinary Nigerians. He said the money is enough to build many standard schools equipped with all facilities and the situation has made it imperative for all Nigerians to cooperate and contribute to the fight against corruption (AllAfrica, 2010). Similarly, Nuhu Ribadu stated that more than 380 billion dollars has either been stolen or wasted by Nigerian governments since independence. He further stated that the missing money has gone to waste and that Nigeria has nothing much to show for it (BBC, 2006).

Corruption and corrupt practices in Nigeria constitutes the failure of governance and the prevalence of bad leadership. According to Chinua Achebe:

'The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or weather or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility and to the challenges of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership' (Ezenwa, 1997).

Generally, corruption in all forms open up the gap between the government and the wider society. Corruption set away nations from achieving public good and improving the standard of living of its citizens. It

creates unemployment and increases poverty in many ways. Most directly, it diverts public resources away from the poor masses to selected few. It reduces revenue collections and resources available for infrastructure and public services. It eats away the moral and social fabric of public life leading to increased lawlessness, social and political instability. Corruption leads to loss of confidence, legitimacy and decrease the standard of government services and infrastructure, thereby affecting the quality of life of the people. Kofi Annan said that: Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government's ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice and discouraging foreign aid and investment'(UNODC, 2003). Similarly, Olusegun Obasanjo said that

Corruption is the greatest single bane of Nigeria society, which need to be tackled head-on at all levels. Corruption must not be condoned so that Nigeria would survive and develop in an orderly, reasonable and predictable way. As no society can achieve anything near its full potential if it allows corruption to permeate every layer of its society (BBC, 1999).

The effect of corruption on any democratic system is devastating. It denies the people all opportunities, rights and privileges offered by democratic governance. It discourages the establishment of domestic and foreign investment. It subvert democratic growth, hinders economic growth and contributes to political instability. Corruption and corrupt practices creates avenue for bribery, nepotism and misappropriation of public funds.

Recommendation and Conclusion

In Nigeria, corruption has grown under the weight of accumulated bad policies and lack of transparency by past leaders in their public transactions. Corruption has permeated every layer of the society and made most people to become vulnerable to corrupt practices due to the condition of uncertainty and lack of hope for the future.

Government at all levels should address the issue of corruption, poverty and unemployment, because as long as the people remain poor and lack access to basic needs, they will be subjected to all kinds of corrupt practices. The government need to erect permanent and unbiased structures in the country to constantly tackle corruption. There is also a need for government to endorse principles of good governance which include an effective and efficient public service, an independent judicial system, responsiveness to the needs of the society at large, legal framework to enforce contracts, credible system for accountability and transparency with regards to public sectors operations, an independent public auditor, respect for rule of law and human rights at all levels of government, and a free press.

These features are essential building blocks for sustaining political and economic development in a country.

The mass media and the civil society also has a crucial role to play in exposing the corrupt leaders. The mass media need to educate the people of their rights and role as citizens in the war against corruption. The citizens need to be encourage to always strive against the temptation to offer, take or involve in corrupt practices. Civil organizations in Nigeria can periodically engage in the business of recruiting, inculcating, orientating, training and nurturing the citizens on the qualities of leadership. The outcome will generate a new breed of political leaders with exceptional skills and good vision. There is also a need for civil society organizations, mass media and government alike to stand up to the task of changing the mind-set of the people, by educating Nigeria leaders on the needs of focusing on political and economic development of the country rather than personal gains.

References:

Adewale, Akande (2009). 'Nigeria at 49: Leadership as an Epidemic'. Available online at: <http://newsdiaryonline.com/epidemic.htm> (accessed 27 July, 2014).

Aka, Jubril Olabode (2010). Great People, Great Country, Nigeria the Beautiful: East or West, Home Is the Best. Bloomington. (Trafford Publishing).

AllAfrica (2010). 'Nigeria: Politicians Stole U.S. \$300 Billion Since 1960 - ICPC'. Available online at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201005270477.html> (accessed 25 July, 2014).

AllAfrica (2013). 'Nigeria: Sanusi's Letter to Jonathan - Outrage Trails U.S. \$49.8 Billion Unremitted Oil Revenue'. Available online at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201312110310.html> (accessed 19 December, 2014).

Bamidele, Ojo (2001). Problems and prospects of sustaining democracy in Nigeria. Huntington. (Nova Publishers).

British Broadcasting Corporation News (BBC) (1999). 'Nigerian President Obasanjo's inaugural speech'. Available online at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/monitoring/356065.stm> (accessed 10 October, 2014).

British Broadcasting Corporation News (BBC) (2006). 'Nigerian leaders 'stole' \$380bn'. Available online at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6069230.stm> (accessed 25 July, 2014).

Ernest, Uwazie (2003). Conflict resolution and peace education in Africa. Lanham. (Lexington Books).

Ezenwa, Ohaeto (1997). Chinua Achebe: A Biography. UK. (James Currey Publishers).

- Mbaku, John Mukum (2007). Corruption in Africa: causes, consequences, and clean-ups. Lanham. (Lexington Boo ThisDay Live (2011). ‘The Mysterious Okigbo Report’. Available online at: <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/the-mysterious-okigbo-report/88243/> (accessed 11 November, 2014).ks).
- Ovienloba, Andrew (2007). The Weeping Child, North Carolina. (Lulu.com).
- Premium Times (2013). ‘Download: Sanusi’s Letter to President Jonathan on Nigeria’s ‘stolen’ N8 trillion’. Available online at: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/resources/151244-download-sanusis-letter-to-president-jonathan-on-nigerias-stolen-n8-trillion.html> (accessed 19 December, 2014).
- Premium Times (2014). ‘UPDATE: Alison-Madueke seeks interim injunction stopping Reps from probing N10billion jet scandal’. Available online at: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/159604-alison-madueke-gets-interim-injunction-stopping-reps-from-probing-n10billion-jet-scandal-2.html> (accessed 27 December, 2014).
- Punch Newspaper (2014). ‘Diezani jet scandal: Reps uncover second aircraft’. Available online at: <http://www.punchng.com/news/diezani-jet-scandal-reps-uncover-second-aircraft/> (accessed 27 December, 2014).
- Reuters (2013). ‘Nigeria's NNPC hasn't accounted for \$50 bln in oil sales - cbank’. Available online at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/10/nigeria-oil-fraud-idUSL6N0JP2L720131210> (accessed 18 December, 2014).
- Sahara Reporters (2010). ‘Petition to the ICPC: \$12B Gulf War Oil Windfall – The Law Requires Babangida to Justify or Forfeit His Unexplained Wealth’. Available online at: <http://saharareporters.com/2010/04/18/petition-icpc-12b-gulf-war-oil-windfall-%E2%80%93-law-requires-babangida-justify-or-forfeit-his> (accessed 19 December, 2014).
- Sahara Reporters (2013). ‘Petroleum Minister, Diezani Allison-Madueke, Accused Of Blowing N2 Billion On Private Jets’. Available online at: <http://saharareporters.com/2013/08/19/petroleum-minister-diezani-allison-madueke-accused-blowing-n2-billion-private-jets> (accessed 27 December, 2014).
- Sahara Reporters (2014). ‘Pastor Bakare Praises Lamido Sanusi, Urges Him To Stick By The Truth’. Available online at: <http://saharareporters.com/2014/02/23/pastor-bakare-praises-lamido-sanusi-urges-him-stick-truth> (accessed 19 December, 2014).
- This Day Live (2014). ‘Sanusi’s Letter, Jonathan’s Burden?’. Available online at: <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/sanusi-s-letter-jonathan-s-burden-/168368/> (accessed 19 December, 2014).

ThisDay Live (2011). 'The Mysterious Okigbo Report'. Available online at: <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/the-mysterious-okigbo-report/88243/> (accessed 11 November, 2014).

ThisDay Live (2014). 'President Asks Sanusi to Resign over Leaked \$49.8bn Letter'. Available online at: <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/president-asks-sanusi-to-resign-over-leaked-49-8bn-letter/168407/> (accessed 19 December, 2014).

Umeadi, Michael (2008). A dark century for Sub Sahara Africa: analysis of internal factors influencing foreign direct investment: a case study on Nigeria: the truth and remedies. Bloomington. (Author House).

United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2003). 'Statement on the Adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Convention against Corruption'. Available online at: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/background/secretary-general-speech.html> (accessed 12 December, 2014).