

POLITICAL CORRUPTION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Paper presented at the International conference on Democracy, Governance and Curbing Corruption in sub-Saharan Africa, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, USA 8-10 August 2012.

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Abstract

This paper argued that the emergence of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa is rooted in socioeconomic grievances and demand for better standards of living expressed by the people against obnoxious regimes- colonialism, military or civilian. The author contends that the form of economic system, internal misrule, the complicity of western governments, development donors and creditors (IMF and World Bank) have influenced the process of democratization and governance in particular directions in Africa with serious implications for overall development in the continent. As such, it is not a mere wishes to note that the popular demand for political change in many African countries appear to have much to do with widespread and profound dissatisfaction with deteriorating economic conditions driven by massive political corruption and bad leadership as with deep commitment to democratic values and principles. Thus, since 1999, the expectation of the people of Nigeria that they would enjoy the dividends of democracy with the return to civilian administration is far from being realized. This is particularly so given the highjack of the processes of political competition and elections by the elite and the middle class who exploit it for their selfish benefits rather than for economic redistribution given the unequal nature of the society. This realism explains the fact that twelve years into civilian rule, massive corruption, absence of political openness, transparency, accountability, electoral rigging, god-fatherism holds sway in the polity at all levels, while basic services are eroded coupled with huge poverty and inequality. Be that at it may, the Nigeria's political system presently reward rather than punish corruption despite the setting up of anti-graft agencies as seen in the state of institutional and moral decay in the nation. The paper interrogates the subject of political corruption in Nigeria through the prism of clientelism, prebendalism and patrimonialism, which provides the theoretical framework for understanding the band of continuing underdevelopment in the Nigerian nation and by extension Africa. The paper concludes that political corruption will be fought headlong when we create political structures where the economic and political rights of the people are justiceable; create an environment where the citizenry can define the kind and type of political change they really desire rather than the one that are foisted on them.

Keywords: *Political Corruption, Welfare, Economic Rights and Development.*

Introduction

Since colonial times the governance processes have always been contested by the people of Africa who consistently make demands for improved living conditions through the provision of good infrastructure, education, healthcare, affordable housing, employment opportunities, security etc. These demands, however, encapsulates what development ultimately entails, which is to create a better living condition for the peoples of the world. Given this fact, the challenges of social, economic and political development for sub-Saharan Africa have remained in the front burner of development discourse in the world for the last three (3) decades or more. This is borne

out of the grim reality of statistical data which revealed that of the about 80 percent of the world's population which lives in the developing world, the people's lifestyle are marked by low incomes, high poverty, unemployment and low education (Stiglitz, 2007:26).

It is this push for social change that has brought to fore the demand for sustainable, equitable and democratic development; where the economic and political institutions work for the benefits of the greatest majority, as well as create a social environment where the people have a greater say in decision-making processes that ultimately affect their existence. This is significantly so as the major factor that determines how well a country will do is a function of the "quality" of the public and private institutions, from which decisions get made and in whose interest. However, the development agenda in many African countries have been undermined by several factors, including inept leadership, weak states, institutional impunity, massive corruption which have stifled their quest for socioeconomic transformation. From this context, therefore, one begin to examine the role of the state which is the institution that deals the organization of power, from which various sets of political relationships takes place with respect to the exercise of power, especially political power. In other words, the state is seen as the contemporary locus of power and authority, and the most inclusive social unit within which control is exercised.

This is so as political power refers to; 'power exercised within a group which occupies a relatively well defined territory by a person or set of persons responsible for maintaining the order and integrity of the group as a community and whose commands are supported by the use of legitimate force (Washburn, 1982:18). Thus, the notion of legitimacy is particularly significant in the conceptualization of political power as it convey an element of reciprocity in the exercise of political rule. This is critically so as the ability to exercise political power rests, in part, on the beliefs of those subject to that power. However, since Nigeria gained independence in 1960, a close look at the political structures and processes particularly the democratic institutions with which the political leadership relate with the people have left much to be desired; such that the basis of social contract for which the state was established is completely eroded. Rather than the leadership of the state who occupy positions of political control or governance to use the resources of the country to promote the well-being of their people, they

use their political office and/or position to plunder the country's wealth for their personal self-centred aggrandizement and to reward their personal allies and external foreign collaborators at the expense of the overall national development of their country and people.

Thus of all the problems that undermined our national development, political corruption arising from bad leadership is cited as the greatest impediment that stifles development, produces poverty and reinforces inequality in Nigeria (Smith, 2007:55). Corroborating this fact, Chinua Achebe (1983:1, 38) in his classic book, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, articulates that the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership where political power is used to perpetrate and sustain corruption. Today, corruption permeates almost all facet of our public and private life, such that the language and metaphors of corruption have penetrated the people's understandings of their intimate interpersonal relationships. As such, our political systems and institutions are overwhelmed by filial and particularistic interests groups that undermine our capacity to identify and implement development goals. It is a system characterized by non adherence to the rule of law, secrecy in governance, absent of accountability, transparency and integrity.

Thus, from 1960, venality in terms of corruption and bad leadership have drown the destiny of the Nigerian nation, and has always been part of the Nigerian government (whether military or civilian regime). For instance, since independence, Nigeria has made US\$ 1 trillion dollars, of this US\$ 600 billion has been stolen by our leaders; in 1999, the poverty level was 45 percent and in 2012 it is 76 percent all due to mismanagement of our resources through corruption; the money made from oil from 1999 to 2011 was more than all that was made from 1960-1999 (Save Nigeria Group, 2012), but squandered by our leaders with nothing to show for it in terms of improving the living standards of the people. Today, the Nigerian nation is characterized by massive infrastructural decay unimaginable 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. As such, Nigeria's politics is one characterized by moral and amoral dimensions of corruption. In our political culture, it is common knowledge that with political office come the spoils. The practice of using public office for private gain was by no means an invention of the post 1999 civilian administration. As result of these happenings, the Nigerian people are disenchanted by the obvious show of corruption,

gross mismanagement with the current civilian dispensation to deliver the expected dividends of democracy. Given these current scenarios, scholars and researchers have raised questions as to the feasibility of democracy to meet the people's expectations of better improvement in their living standards as well as guarantee them justice, equity, fairness, economic and political rights. Why has political corruption remained endemic and institutionalized in our democratic dispensation as a country giving its effects of undermining the very foundation of our democratic institutions, ruining our economic development, perverting the rule of law, political stability, security, exacerbating poverty and eroding our social values as a people? How would our politics be without corruption? it is therefore the need to interrogate these questions and proffer ways of tackling it that informs this paper. To achieve this objective, the paper will be broken into five (5) sections following the introduction. The second section will address the issue of democracy and development. Section three will examine political corruption and its effects on development. The fourth section will look at the challenges of tackling political corruption while the fifth section ends with the conclusion.

Development

Development in human society today is not a one-sided process but rather a multi-sided issue. Some individuals perceive development as increase in their skill and ability; others view it as maximum freedom, the ability to create responsibility and so on (Schumpeter, 1934). Dudley Seer (1977) defined development on the basis of human well-being. For him, development does not mean only capital accumulation and economic growth but also the condition in which people in a country have adequate food and job and income inequality among them is greatly reduced. It is a process of bringing about fundamental and sustainable changes in society. It encompasses growth, embraces such aspects of the quality of life as social justice, equality for all citizens, equitable distribution of income and the democratization of the development process (Lawal, 2007:3; Egharevba, 2007).

Collaborating Seers's conception of development, Goulet (1978) observed that though development implies economic, political and cultural transformation, these are not ends in themselves but indispensable means for enriching the quality of human life. Therefore, development must be judged good or bad in the light of normative values operative in the

societies affected or, possibly, of some more universal values. For Goulet there are three general goals of development: life assurance, esteem and freedom. These three goals entails that development exists when people have access to basic food, health, adequate shelter, education and protection; they are being treated as individuals who has worth, rather than tools for the satisfaction of other individual's purposes, and have the capacity, the opportunity, and the incentive to develop and express one's potentialities (Chiegwe, 2000).

Thus, for Goulet, one should speak of development comprehensively and normatively as:

... as a coordinated series of change, whether abrupt or gradual, from a phase of life perceived by a population and all of its components as being less human, to a phase... perceived as more human. These passages are sought as speedily as realistically possible, with a view to minimizing their costs (including intangible human costs') ... (1968b: 309)

Rodney (1972) conceived development whether economic, political or social to imply both increase in input and changes in the technical and institutional arrangement by which it is produced. In other words, development as a multi-dimensional concept is basically about the process of changes which lies around the spheres of societal life. From the foregoing, it become obvious that development involves the capacity of a society, government or social system to manage resources efficiently to improve the well-being of the citizens. This fact, therefore, demand the institutionalization of good governance elements such as adherence to rule of law, accountability and transparency which ensures the efficient utilization of resources that allow for rapid development and growth with equity, in which the poor and the rich both benefit as well.

It is the absence of these processes that creates the room for the existence of corruptive tendencies where those who control political power and their allies begin to circumvent the laws and appropriate the wealth of the nation for their personal interest and aggrandizement through treasury looting, abuse of office, power, and position (see Khan 1996). It is this occurrence of political corruption that impedes development, erodes governmental legitimacy and minimizes the ability of government to reduce poverty, provide essential social services and infrastructure which influences people's freedom to live a better life. Thus, from the above discourse of development, it is clear that development is all about people which are a nation's most important resource, and if a large portion of its people do not live up to their potential-as a result of lack of access to education, healthcare, better nutrition, shelter and infrastructure-the country will not live up to its potential.

Thus, for 51 years after independence, Nigeria is still grappling with the issue of development that characterized her economic, political and social spheres. These problems include high poverty rate, lack of basic infrastructural facilities in all sectors of economy, unemployment, high mortality rate, political instability and insecurity of lives and property (see Suberu, 2007:96). Despite the presence of huge material and human resources, and having earned over a trillion dollars from oil revenue since the 1970s, the country is still mired in poverty, infrastructural squalor, abysmal health and educational services and attendant social frustration and unrest.

Democracy

While much of the debate about developing countries centre on how they can adopt the global neo-liberal economic policy of free market enterprise that will open up new opportunities for investment and provide more resources, development is still not assured (see Stiglitz, *op cit*: 54). However, what is important is the capacity of these countries to use the resources available to them well and take advantage of new opportunities. Thus, the major factor that will determine how well a country will achieve this goal has a lot to do with its governance process, which is depicted by the ‘quality’ of the public and private institutions. Here, governance refers to the process of decision-making and ways in which decisions are implemented (or not). So in any given political system, the government is the major actor, but others can influence the process. This include non-state actors such as religious or tribal leaders, civil society, major landowners, trade unions, financial institutions, the military and community based groups.

Associated with a good system of governance are: citizenship participation in decision making, consensus building where decisions are based on widespread agreement, transparency in decision making processes, responsiveness to the needs of the citizenry, effective and efficient provision of basic services and ensuring equitability and inclusiveness in the distribution of resources and benefits without marginalizing any group (UNESCAP, 2003). In the same vein, the World Bank also identified six indicators of good governance to help countries identify areas of weakness so that capacity building and assistance strategies are applied for greater effectiveness. These indicators include: voice and accountability, political stability and lack of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption (World Bank, 2003). Similarly, The Human Development Report (2002:6) defines ‘effective

governance' as a set of principles and core values that allow poor people to gain power through participation while protecting them from arbitrary, unaccountable actions of governments, multinational corporations and others. That means that ensuring institutions and power are structured and distributed in a way that gives real voice and space to the poor people and create mechanisms through which the powerful can be held accountable for their actions. The report highlights the following key institutions of democratic governance:

- A system of representation with well-functioning political parties and interest associations;
- An electoral system that guarantees free and fair elections as well as universal suffrage;
- A system of checks and balances based on the separation of powers, with an independent judicial and legislative branches;
- A vibrant civil society, able to monitor government and private business- and provide alternative forms of political participation;
- A free, independent media; and
- Effective civilian control over the military and other security forces (UNDP, 2002:4).

Thus from the above definitions, scholars have come to identify good governance as a key factor for building sustainable peace and long-term development (Johnson 1982; White and Wade 1988). This is borne out of the fact that governance can be linked to tackling poverty, promoting economic growth and human development. To achieve this objective requires the practice of politics which is as important to successful development as economics. Since sustained poverty reduction requires equitable growth, it is also important that the poor have political power. And the best way to achieve that in a manner consistent with human development objectives is by building strong and deep forms of democratic governance at all levels of society (UNDP, 2002:5). It is this renewed interest for the political dimension of development that has led to the renewed interest for democracy in development. As we all know, democracy means in Ancient Greek 'rule by the people'. It is now universally accepted that democracy requires more than elections and majority rule. In addition to the exercise of basic political rights like the rights to vote and holding of free and fair elections, democracy involves respect for legal entitlements, respect for the rights to free expression (and uncensored media),

the right to associate freely and hold public discussions, the right to organize political movement of protests (Dreze and Sen, 2002:24). A democratic system of government ensures that the government in power is accountable to the people and the laws of the land. However, it is essential to understand that a democratic government does not necessarily lead to good governance. At best it provides the basis for it. While there may be no best way of achieving good governance the following stand out as the most common elements. These are accountability, transparency, combating corruption, participatory governance and an enabling legal/judicial framework.

Thus with Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999, the people had high hopes that the democratic process would deliver for them the so-called 'dividends of democracy' in terms of improving their economic and social welfare given its perceived role as the harbinger of development. However, the evidence on ground as to whether the transition to democracy has been able to ensure better governance and tackle the problem of poverty, infrastructural decay, unemployment, diseases, income disparities and inequality does not seem to paint a good picture. Despite her significant natural and human resources and its considerable economic potentials which include having the 7th largest oil and gas reserves in the world and being the 6th largest exporter of oil, Nigeria's economic performance, human development and overall social transformation does not match its potential. Its size, wealth and diversity generate high expectations but it remains "a rich country with poor people." Its oil wealth and considerable agricultural potential have not translated into better living conditions for most of its people. Over two-thirds of the population lives on less than US \$1 per day- which amount to 112.5 million Nigerians living in poverty out of the estimated 163 million (NBS poverty and income distribution report, 2012; The Punch, 2012:19). The report also revealed rather paradoxically that despite the fact that the Nigerian economy is growing, the proportion of Nigerians living in poverty is increasing every year. Besides, income inequality in the country has risen from 0.429 in 2004 to 0.447 in 2010, just as the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. Furthermore, available figures also indicate that in 2004, the country's relative poverty measurement stood at 54.4 percent but increased to 69 percent in 2010.

Given these statistics which is clearly reflected in our lack of basic social services, drop in life expectancy, increase in child hood mortality, maternal mortality, gender disparity which

have deepened human poverty among the people, Nigerians are having strong reservation on the viability of the democratic institutions to work for their benefit both in political and socioeconomic terms. Be that as it may, most of the resentment and contempt of the people is directed at the elected officials in government at all levels who use their political power to misappropriate state resources that would have been used to address the basic needs of the people. Similarly, these so-called 'leaders' personalized forms of governance that promote the culture of corruption by engaging in conspicuous consumption and earning mega salaries while the populace wallow in abject poverty (see Ekeh, 1983) . Besides, there is the outcry of obvious disconnect between the government and the governed in the formulation and implementation of public policies that have direct impact on the lives of the people.

For the people, the political elite in power lacked sufficient democratic culture, commitment and political will to build democratic institutions such as free and fair elections, independent judiciary, universal suffrage, independent electoral body, well functioning political parties, accountability and transparency and rule of law that will constrain their own power. Furthermore, the political elites fail to come to grip with the reality that sovereignty belong to the people and that the hold power in trust for the people. They also fail to appreciate the fact that government policies will have greater legitimacy and sustainability when the people feel some sense of involvement and ownership of it. In sum, the form of democracy in Nigeria defines the corrosive and defective nature of the whole political system which is characterized by both moral and amoral dimensions of corruption. In Nigerian political culture, it is common knowledge that with political office come the spoils where the practice of using public office for private gain is seen as normal despite the existence of anti-corruption agencies or institutions.

Political Corruption

Given the state of underdevelopment in Nigeria since independence, several attempts have been made by scholars, global policy makers and institutions to understand the cause(s) and the continued prevalence of the development crisis. Among the factors identified that undermined Nigeria's development are colonial legacy, corrupt leadership and democracy (Umez, 2000). For those who point to the colonial legacy, they contend that the problem of our underdevelopment is traceable to the origin of the Nigerian state by the British colonial

authority, which was exploited to advance their economic interests without engendering any legitimacy where the state would be used to drive the process of social transformation. It was within this framework that colonial politics was structured and reduced to the crude mechanics of opposing forces driven by the calculus of power. For everyone in the political arena, security lay only in the accumulation of power, such that the drive for it was made the top priority in all circumstances and sought for by all means than the drive for development (Ake, 2001:3). It is this character of the state that was carried to independence and has continued till date such that the quest for state power has not only increased the political intensity for competition and conflict among our political leaders but also created the tendency to use the state for private accumulation. The democracy perspective adduces the long absence of democracy caused by military rule as the cause of our underdevelopment (Umez, 2000: 29-30). While this factor may be important, it is critical to state that with the return to democracy in 1999, mismanagement and mis-rule in government has continued unabated as the elites have hijacked the democratic process as they govern the people with impunity, engage in open manipulation of the electoral process, rigging of elections to subvert the will of the people as was clearly evident in the 2003 and 2007 general elections. The civilian leadership has failed to deliver the dividends of democracy to the nation's mostly poor masses.

The corrupt leadership perspective believes that corruption on the part of the leadership has been the bane of development in Nigeria. This view is so sacrosanct to the interrogation of the bane of Nigeria's underdevelopment since the return to civilian rule in 1999, that this paper sees political corruption as the most critical factor that affect all her development endeavour in all sectors. This is significantly so because the greatest challenge to Nigeria's development are Nigerians themselves as represented by the political leaders who should be held responsible for the present pathetic state of underdevelopment in the country (Falola, 2005:3). Today there is a widespread perception among Nigerians that politics represents the worst form of corruption in the land. The impact of corruption on the totality of developmental and governance processes in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Underscoring the impact of corruption on the practice of democracy, Nwabueze (2007:96) observed "that the most tragic consequence of corruption in Nigeria is its effects upon the attitudes and mentality of the people. It has created a widespread

feeling of frustration, of disgust and cynicism, which has in its turn undermined the enthusiasm for and faith in the state.”

It is within this context that one would interrogate the context of political corruption in the nation’s democratic experiment and the challenges it poses for her Development. Corruption is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon which characterize the global economy. It exists in the developed and developing world and it permeates the economic, political and administrative spheres. Corruption in Africa is simply a development and governance issue as it erodes governmental legitimacy, undermines the effective delivery of public goods and services and protection of the vulnerable groups in society. In Nigeria, as in many African states, corruption is a malaise that inflicts the society and undermines its stability. Corruption drains from Africa countries over US \$140 billion per year (Ribadu, 2007a). Enhanced governmental accountability and transparency, increased public participation in decision making, strengthened public sector and civil society institutions and greater adherence to the rule of law is the greatest weapon that will not only improve governance but counter corrupt practices.

Various scholars and organizations have defined corruption differently. One of the widely cited definitions is that proffered by Nye (1978) in which “corruption is a behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status-gain; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private regarding behaviour”. The World Bank (1997) defined corruption as “the abuse of public office for private gains”. This includes, when public officials accept, solicit or extort bribes to subvert or circumvent public policies for competitive advantage and profit”. Similarly the UNDP (2004) defined corruption as the “misuse of public power, office or authority for private benefit-through bribery, extortion, influence peddling, nepotism, fraud, speed money or embezzlement”. Yet the Transparency International (TI) (2002) sees corruption as “an inappropriate or illegal behaviour of the public sector official (politician or public officer) by misusing the entrusted power for private gain of the person or related people. It is usually an activity that is outside of constitutional government process, which involves the sale of publicly produced goods and services by government employees for payment or bribes not sanctioned by the government. Corruption is a form of rent-seeking enterprise or activity, which is illegal, or an

unauthorized transfer of money from one person to another (group to group), or an in-kind substitute.

The literature on corruption in developing countries generally suggests five strands of hypotheses as explanations for the causes of corruption, namely, rent-seeking, cultural relativity, low salary, imitation and institutional/political centralization. Based on existing studies on corruption, the following types of corruption are discernable in Nigeria: political corruption, bureaucratic corruption, electoral corruption and corporate corruption. Political corruption involves the sale by government officials of government property for personal gain. It involves the use of public office by politicians both for financial gain and purposes of remaining in office. It is further facilitated by the creation of rents seeking projects. Bureaucratic corruption involves the use of office for pecuniary gain. This type of corruption is common place in Nigeria since government plays a critical role in the development process, particularly in the domestic economy, here, bureaucrats engage in rent-seeking opportunities for personal aggrandizement. Socio-economic conditions, such as poverty and inequality, cultural norms and practices, kinship goes a long way to shape the attitude and behaviour of public officials.

Electoral corruption occurs when people, whether endowed with political clout or not, illegally try to buy influence through illegal payoffs such as illegal funding of campaigns, illegal campaign contributions, bribes, buying of votes for cash or inducements (i.e. paying voters to vote, thereby influencing their choices), promise of contracts or other favours. Electoral corruption may also take coercive forms, such as paying thugs to intimidate or threaten supporters of a candidate in order to compel supporters to vote for candidate who employed the thugs or stop them from voting entirely. Electoral corruption can lead to outright rigging of elections; expectation of reward once victory is achieved, or encouraging quid pro quo deals (Etzioni, 1988). It can also lead to the undermining of democratic values, especially where there is a conflict between the politicians' interest and those of the public. As for corporate corruption, it occurs between private business corporations and their vendors or clients. It can also take place within a corporation when officers use company's resources for private aggrandizement, at the expense of the shareholders (Bhargava, 2005). Corruption may also take the following forms: market imperfection, extortion, subversion, autogenetic, defensive, investive, nepotistic, supportive, and transactive corruption (Gire, 1999).

Furthermore, corruption can also occur when the actions of individuals, groups or firms in both public and private sectors influence the formation of laws, regulation, decrees, and other government policies to their own advantage by means of illicit and non-transparent provision of private benefits to public officials. It could also occur when changing and altering the implementation of existing laws, rules and regulations to “provide advantages to either state or non state actors as a result of illicit and non transparent provision of private gain to public officials. However, for the purpose of this study, the institutional theory is engaged to interrogate the causes of corruption in the body polity. The perspective states that corruption arises when public officials have wide-ranging authority, little accountability and perverse incentives or when their accountability responds to informal rather than formal forms or regulation (UNDP, 2004).

For institutional theorist of corruption, the causes of corruption occur because of the failure of state institutions and a lack of the capacity to manage society by means of framework of social, judicial, political and economic checks and balances or where there is monopoly control of public officials wielding discretionary powers in the absence of accountability systems. This perspective is critical in understanding the widespread and depth of political corruption among elected officials at all levels of governance in Nigeria. Thus, in the guise of hiding under the cover of ‘immunity’ from persecution while in office, these officials have recklessly engaged in abusing the power of their office, gross abuse of budgeting process, financial extravagance and pursuit of white elephant projects that hold little benefits for the people. For instance, since 1999, both and the Obasanjo administration spent over US \$ 800 million on the Turn Around Maintenance (TAM) of our refineries; the Yaradua government also expended US \$400 million, but still yet, the nation’s refineries are still operating under installed capacity and nobody is being prosecuted. The same fate also befall the Independent Power Project (IPP) where over US \$16 billion was alleged to have been expended by the Obasanjo to generate power energy, with no kilowatts of electricity generated and nobody is held to account for this colossal waste of public funds.

It is this failure of institutions that has created room for the proliferation of rent-seeking opportunities where few individuals have been given the monopoly for the provision of essentials goods and services, bribes are offered for issuance of license to business, permits, privatization of state owned enterprises or for government contracts. In the political front, the

democracy bequeathed to us is one that is fraught with a lot of inconsistencies that allow for corruption to thrive on a massive scale. This fact is seen from the very root and foundation upon which the nation's democracy itself is founded-constitution, party system, electoral commission etc. The institution of the state at all levels is used as a harbinger for the perpetuation and consolidation of corruption. The political elite lacked the moral values and discipline that make democracy work- such as due process, liberty, political responsiveness, meritocracy, duty, obligation and the spirit of sacrifice. Today, it is criminals who found their way to power where they choke the people with their moral effluvia. Our legal cum political system suffer from medieval rot, loss of conscience and dysfunctionality. We now live in a political jungle where the law has been turned into a limbless ass, where order has gone under, where the criminal is hero (i.e. the Ibori saga, Joshua Dariye, Bode George are a case in point). In Nigeria, the political leader's preoccupation with politics is with winning and retaining power, and using the power to serve themselves and deal with their enemies. Politics in Nigeria is very much about money and at the province of the rich. It is rooted in ethnic, regional and community ties and depends on power patronage and corruption. As such, a greater majority of election seekers use their position and offices to better and benefit themselves, their families and cronies than the people who voted them into positions. Elections are driven by processes of patronage and godfatherism where the highest bidder wins it all and not their ideologies.

Given these happenings, therefore, one can clearly argue that the state in Nigeria can be classified as a "failed" state given its kleptocratic and "lootocratic" nature, coupled with its consistent failure to meet the expectations of the people to live improved living standards (Obuah and Enyinda, 2004; Foreign Policy, 2006 and 2009; world Bank IEG, 2006). Besides, other scholars have also opined that corruption in Nigeria has moved from prebendalism to predation in which office holders and public officials try to repay their supporters, family members, cronies and ethnic group members with sums of money, contracts and jobs (Lewis, 1996). There are reports that about 212 billion pounds from oil money has been looted from the country's treasury by past and present leaders, US\$ 380 billion dollars were squandered by public officials between 1969 and 1999, and that EFCC was helping to combat an estimated 12 billion pounds which is annually stolen from state coffers (Independent Newspapers, 14 August 2006, HRW, 2007). There is widespread perception that judges are easily bribed or settled to get favourable

judgment, and numerous allegations that legislators both at the national and state levels accept bribes and favours from the executive branch to facilitate the passage of bills favourable to the executive branch.

Thus, from the foregoing discourse it is obvious that corruption is seen as Nigeria's greatest albatross, responsible for its state of instability, debt overhang, barrier to democratic elections and impediment to flow of foreign direct investment (Ribadu, 2007b). In fact political corruption is seen as the main threat to the survival of the current democratic experiment, given the fact it accounts for about 20 percent of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (TI, 2005). In all, the net effect of corruption is negative for all societies, especially developing countries like Nigeria. It leads to economic inefficiencies, inhibits long-term foreign and domestic investments, misallocates talents to rent seeking and away from productive activities; induces wrong sectoral priorities and technological choices. It also undermines state effectiveness in the delivery of services, and the protection of the vulnerable and the environment. Corruption promotes economic decay and social and political instability, perverts the ability of the state to foster rule of law, and eventually corrodes trust and undermine legitimacy. These costs mean that sustained development in Nigeria requires mounting a frontal attack on corruption, especially political corruption.

Conclusion

Since it is clear that development is all about transforming the lives of the people in a given society, successful development therefore requires not just a vision and a strategy, but the know-how to convert those ideas into projects and policies. For development to be holistic, programmes must out from the people-communities that they service and address the needs of the people in those communities. Thus, local participation in the choice and design of projects leads to a higher likelihood of success. Development will happen best with community commitment. What this mean therefore is that the Nigerian people must rise up from their sleeping state and begin to demand from the 'leaders' their economic and political rights, and ensure that these rights are made justiceable in the court of law. They must also insist that the "immunity clause" for political office holder be removed from our constitution. In all, the citizenry must make the political leaders to realize that socioeconomic justice is at the heart of

any democratic process, since development and democracy are mutually reinforcing and inclusive. Thus, the key focus in development is creating equity and ensuring that the fruits of growth are widely shared. Until democracy can deliver on this goal of economic empowerment for its people, it will only be short-lived. As for curbing corruption, it is important to develop an institutional framework that makes death sentence the punishment for corrupt practices. Equally important, the institutions established to oversee, expose and punish corruption must be insulated from the very actors they are supposed to be controlling.

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