

Politics and Development

Down the Great Drains: A Sociological Discourse of the Entangle and Challenges of Corruption and Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The drains in human and material resources and the challenges posed by corruption to socio-economic development, particularly in third World countries have remained an indelible enigma. The economic growth rates in industrially developed economies of the North and recently, the Asian Tigers are rising geometrically while the per capita income in the developing economies have either been declining, constant or have risen at negligible rates. Major causes of this development status are traced to the inability of the developing countries, particularly in Africa to insist on standards of authentic and knowledge leadership, problems of insecurity, fear of investment and dearth of enabling structures for development. Corruption has been seen to be at the centre of this cataclysmic crisis of development. It dampens the spirit of identification, commitment, entrepreneurship, patriotism and nationalism. It commits the citizenry to a socio-psychological duel in their efforts for survival. This paper uses three paradigms to explain this duel. It suggests a reform redirected at the cultural values of material acquisition, a holistic fight on corruption, adoption of transparency in governance, use of critical agenda and local organizations for micro-economic stability to counter the effects of corruption and underdevelopment.

Introduction

The underdevelopment status of Nigeria poses a serious concern when it is reconciled with the rapid changes in world economies. This is a challenge because the underdevelopment status strangulates the desired rapid economic and social progress for the benefit of the entire population. This challenge explains why Nigeria and the entire developing countries, especially the Third World, must develop. The misery, poverty, unemployment, diseases, squalid conditions and general insecurity of life characteristic of the developing countries and Nigeria in particular, are now being recognized and efforts are made to reduce the agonizing pains these conditions pose to development.

The necessity for rapid economic and social development is a challenge because despite efforts the developing countries are making in the field of development, the gap between them and the technologically developed and rich nations of the North

continues to widen. This is not because of insufficient efforts on their part but because of certain global and internal forces that are in operation (Mboya, 1979). For example, in the past few decades, some of the developing countries have not been developing. In some cases, per capita incomes have fallen, while for very many of them per capita incomes have either declined, remained constant or have risen at negligible rates (Brundland, 1991). On the other hand, rapid growth rates have been recorded in the industrially developed nations, which are ironically described here as the developing nations because of their continued knowledge acquisition and development orientation. The lot of the developing or underdeveloped nations has rather been stagnated.

The more important issue in the development of these Third World countries, Nigeria inclusive, is the challenge posed by the inability to adhere to accepted standards of authentic knowledge leadership and development orientation (Yalokwu, 2008). The bane of Nigeria's development, for example, has been anchored on the nation's leadership infested with corrupt practices of personal enrichment and intimidation. The leaders are accused of converting public money meant for structural and human development for personal purse. Limiting the challenge of corruption to political leadership is to say the least. Public organizations and the organized private sector are not excluded in this caricature and cataclysmic crisis in the nation's march to economic and social development. There is the postulation that the corrupt practices in the public sector leadership spill over to the private sector where most of the loots are invested. This postulation is based on the understanding that crisis, conflicts and discordant voices are always heard and experienced at the time profit sharing in investments made with looted public funds by corrupt investors. Public organizations and organized private sector have been seen to aid and encourage corruption. Their sponsorship of candidates in 1999, 2003 and 2007 Elections in Nigeria and their financial support to Obasanjo's library project while in office are clear examples. Elsewhere, in Zimbabwe, the events characterizing the re-election of President Mugabe in 2008 and the after effects are definitely distractive to the nation's development. It becomes difficult to reconcile issues related to entrepreneurship, ineffective leadership, management and corruption with regards to development.

In a related instance, it is observed that, in spite of the introduction and operations of agencies instituted by Nigerian government against corruption such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Due process in Public Procurement, Code of Conduct Bureau and SERVICOM, corruption and fraud continue to escalate among the highly placed government officials, Chief Executives in public and private organizations and sundry. The probe of past governors and Chief executives since the step down of Obasanjo's regime and the declarations of Election Petition Tribunals on the 2007 Elections in Nigeria attest to this fact. This beats the imagination of the conformists and suggests governments' lip service to the fight against corruption in the country. Service delivery and good governance remain abysmally poor. The impression any concerned citizen gets is that the devastating effects of corruption have become a knotty cancer that has infested the attitude of Nigerians in their expectations for justice, equity, good governance, security of life and prosperity, infrastructural and service delivery and national development from their political leaders. Most of the

citizens have sought asylum in foreign countries for survival and security.

This dampens the people's spirit of commitment to development; entrepreneurship, patriotism and nationalism as they helplessly watch the ostentatious life styles of Nigeria's political leaders (Iheriohanma, 2006). This impression challenges the people's attitude towards their leaders in the areas of trusteeship, security, proper resource management and commitment to development and the welfare of the people. The disillusion, helplessness and hopelessness this cancer creates in the minds of the people have rather upturned the cherished traditional societal values of hard work, entrepreneurship, development-oriented knowledge acquisition, commitment etc. as people now innovate means and short-cuts for accessing success, thus challenging the institutionalized structures. The argument therefore, is that this problematic situation has created a socio-psychological duel and split personality characterized by 'if you can't beat them, you join them' among the socialized and conforming citizens entrapped in the bewilderment of hopelessness and insecurity.

It has created repression and counter movements as a result of authoritarian and corrupt leadership that is divested of knowledge management and which finds favour in developing character amour and roguish and roughened personality types. The incidences in the Niger Delta Region, the oil well of the Nigerian nation clearly exemplify the claim. The critical situation has led to the emergence of so many reform movements such as the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), etc. These have disrupted oil exploitation and exploration, leading to kidnapping of foreign oil workers and investors, blowing up of oil installations etc (Dode, 2007). It has set the monstrous corruption against development. This is unfortunate now that world economies are globalized and are on the fast lane.

The challenges that corrupt has on national development, and the socio-psychological battle it has engaged the people and society in, form the focus of this treatise. This exposition also looks at the theoretical exploration on the interaction between corruption and survival, the challenges and implications of corruption on national development and the strategies that will help to eradicate corruption.

The Challenges of Corruption and the Socio-Psychological Duel: An Overview

Corruption refers to uncoordinated but conscious efforts by individuals or group of people to accumulate private wealth though illegal (unconstitutional) or unauthorized use of public resources and machinery. The Oxford advanced Learner's Dictionary looks at corruption from the legal point and asserts that it is a dishonest or wicked behaviour, especially with public officials willing to accept money or make personal gains from services they render.

Following from the above, corruption refers to an anti-social behaviour and efforts involving, especially public functionaries or their agents, to change the established structure of processes by the society in order to confer on them improper benefits such as dishonest wealth and defiled situations that are contrary to legal and moral norms. Issues underlying the definition are that corruption involves more than an individual interacting in social and official situations; involves behaviours that are anti-social that produce unacceptable benefits against the laws of the land; is linked with

unacceptable behaviour of public officials entrusted with good democratic governance, management of public resources, security of lives and property, provision of social services, public utilities and infrastructural development, service delivery, etc. refers to the ineffectiveness and inefficiencies of bureaucratic officials and structures meant for the re-orientation and development of peoples' positive attitude towards service and entrepreneurship, trusteeship and commitment to people's welfare and national development.

The above issues underlying corruption, especially in Nigeria, indicate challenges on the socio-psychological being of the people. It is note-worthy that there are contradictions between what the government of Nigeria claims about its efforts to make life meaningful for the people and the dividends of democracy on one hand, and on the other, what Transparency International (World Bank, 1996), British Department for International Development Country Strategy Paper (CSP) (2000), Onomode (2000), Ayua (2001) etc. separately write about corruption, government and management of public funds, resources and welfare of Nigeria populace, especially in the Obasanjo's democratic dispensation.

A catalogue of the types and forms of corruption that have debilitating effects, and which pervasively bear on the sociological and psychological life styles and standard of average Nigerians, is made by Omimode (2000). The categorized phenomena and their seeming implications include among others capital flight that involves looted funds and wealth kept secretly aboard and which should have been invested domestically to provide jobs, employment to the teeming graduate youths especially and regeneration of wealth. Misappropriation of public funds and misprioritized policies that have left delivery of public goods, services and infrastructures unexecuted and at best abandoned and improperly executed. This challenges the moral behaviour, credibility and trusteeship of government and its agencies. It rather negatively affects the followership and commitment of citizens. The oversight functions and investigations of various committees of National Assembly notwithstanding. Illegal arms deal, money laundering (419), drug trafficking etc. that have psyched the morals and perception of Nigerians, especially the youths and which have drastically changed the social values of wealth and wealth accumulation in the society. The effects of multiplicity of illegal arms deal are noticed in the inefficiency of the structure and or the institutionalized social control agencies (police, civil defense etc), pattern of political transition and voting system (electoral fraud), incessant armed robbery and youths' violence, especially in the Niger Delta region. Arms deal provides ready job and alternative avenues to amass wealth as well as weapon for agitation against marginalization. The aggrieved and derailing unemployed youths are now forced to be ready recruits as militia for agitation. Gratification and reward system in form of monetary, pecuniary, material or physical favours for performing official duties. The sociological and psychological duel challenges the nascent and seemingly codified life style of almost every public official in the discharge of official duties. This distorts official processes, diverts government revenue to personal purse and deters national economic development. Abuse of office and official violation of oath of office where "elected" officers corrupt official procedure for personal gains. This affects the perception and psyche of elected public officers and the electorate who

expect more from the government positions the elected officers occupy to the extent that the officers are coerced, under community pressure, into violation of oath of office. Corrupt practices here are influenced by the persistence of “godfatherism” and “politics of settlement” in Nigerian politics. Notwithstanding the above, people see politics and occupation of political positions as easy avenues to amass wealth. Nepotism involves extending underserved favours, positions, advantages and even pecuniary factors to one’s kinsmen, tribe and ethnic origin (the “I.M. factor” or “Imamadu syndrome” in Igbo land, South-east of Nigeria).

The following are also supplements to the catalogue or forms of corruption. Destruction of people’s properties in the name of city beautification and urban reclamation. The El-Rufai’s gang-star acrobats at restoring the Abuja Master Plan through destruction of ‘shanties’ and unauthorized building structures, the repeal and re-validation of government allotted plots during the time he was minister of the capital territory are fraught with corruption. They are not development-oriented since such acts have negative multiplier effects to the economy. The recent purported ban on El-Rufai from holding any official position by the National Assembly serves as a deserving deterrent to future corrupt officials. The declaration and verdicts of 2007 Electoral Tribunals and Panels and subsequent reversal of judgement by Appeal Courts give the impression that justice in Nigeria is only meant for the highest bidder. This is a case of Human Rights abuse. Use of police and the armed forces for intimidation, especially before, during and after elections. The intimidation is on political opponents and naïve electorates, all to achieve collusion with the ruling party(ies). There is the use of official social control institutions and structures every now and again in the pretence of quelling insurrection, protests, etc. and to check insecurity and armed robbery. No one has pondered to explore the root causes of the insecurity, armed robbery and kidnapping escapades. Police and the army are lined up on almost all roads in the country. At every checkpoint (toll gates), commercial motorists are financially extorted and those who resist are brutalized and accused. Government keeps deaf ears to public outcries. This indicates government connivance. Party selection of candidates or what has recently been tagged ‘consensus candidates’ for elected positions in the pretence that the candidates will deliver. The fact is that these candidates have actually paid their dues or are sponsored by political god-fathers. The continued Human Rights abuses involving illegal detention of citizens, the military destruction of entire Odi town in Bayelsa State and Zango kataf in Niger State during the regime of Obasanjo etc. These distort the perception and expression of followership. However, the present regime of Umar Musa Yar’adua has a semblance of adherence to constitutionality.

The conscience and poverty status of most Nigerians and Third World countries in general are hopelessly challenged by the perverted effects of corruption. No one, as it is observed, sits and watches the nation’s leadership and those in authority derogate the accepted standards and official procedures. Corruption is infectious, especially to the most ill-socialized and the impressionable. Again, aggression, political conflicts and youth violence have been linked to observed expressions by deviants and the oppressed with respect to their fight against marginalization, depressed push to the periphery (Galtung, 1996) and structural poverty (Iheriohanma, 2006).

Interaction between Corruption, Development and Survival: A Theoretical Exploration

It is therefore, reasonable to argue that the sociological and psychological challenges of corruption, especially in developing countries, of which Nigeria is one, can be explicated by three major paradigms without prejudice to the others. These models are the culture of materialism thesis, the anomie theory and the external locus of control.

The Culture of Materialism Thesis examines a society that extols the goals of material wealth against the accepted means of acquiring the wealth. This society challenges its members to excellence, wealth acquisition, achievement motive and drive etc; makes comparison between it, individuals and other developed societies and wealthy individuals; adores wealth and rewards achievement irrespective of the source. It develops excessive euphoria and craze for materialism and achievement. The same society does not provide opportunities for all to access success. Such a society ends up producing irrationally behaved members whose focus is individualistic rather than altruistic. The pervasive situation creates opportunities for people to adopt corruption as a way of life to access material wealth (Iheriohanma, 2006) as they feel their ways are blocked by the corrupt political leadership and their policies. Some of the aggrieved seek escape routes to other countries, some die in the process while the brave indulge in arms deal and robbery. These create room for the great drain as human resources are lost.

The Anomie Theory is proposed by Merton (1970) in the tradition of Durkheim's concept of anomie – a situation of normlessness – where the rules governing behaviour and social life have become unclear. Merton's version of anomie is often referred to as structural strain theory. Human beings have a natural inclination and tendency to observe norms because they have a part of personality called conscience. The assumption is that people break norms because of the pressures or terrible strains on norms that challenge existing structures and situations. In a situation of rapid social change and in an era of globalization in which we are, the probability of an imbalance between people's institutional goals' arrangement and the available opportunities to achieve these goals exist. Thus, people are bottled up in a strained situation. The need to survive, achieve goals and success coerce a greater majority whose access to means of success are blocked to innovate other ways of accessing goals and success. The innovative means might involve the use of unapproved means and structures thus leading to corrupt practices, escape, migration in search of livelihood and drain of development catalyst, the human resource.

The External as against the Internal Locus of Control examines situations where the depressed and marginalized in the society attribute their situation to external influences beyond their control (Galtung, 1996; Iheriohanma, 2006). This expresses people's perception that their failures in life are not because they failed to plan and or lacked personal efforts, but because, in our own case, those in authority failed to provide them opportunities to actualize their tall dreams. They see themselves as marginalized and deprived and can take up arms against a perceived enemy, the government and institutions. This perception develops an attitude of hatred, deviation and a "we-feeling". The psychic feeling may culminate into violence, crime, kidnapping, hijacking, corruption, sabotage and espionage as survival strategies targeted at the social structure and the nation.

There is a general consensus among scholars that globalization not only marks a new phase in the development of capitalism but has accelerated the pace of social change. Accordingly, as globalization is considered the triumph of capitalist world economy that is tied together by the logic of capital accumulation, it has infested the desire of individuals and groups to amass wealth. What it has not done, among the developing nations, is the attitude-building and re-orientation for the desire for entrepreneurship, enterprise and productivity. It has robbed the developing nations of the South the traditional culture of independence in productivity, interdependence in communal efforts of development, crafts and guild production. It has disorganized the traditional agricultural and production systems that hitherto ensured food on the table of every African. It has rather diverted attention of the people to importation of finished goods and established the culture of consumerism (Iheriohanma, 2006) and luxury. The underdevelopment status it has created upholds the economic development standards and principles set by the North. The complicated standard creates enigma to a fragile economy.

In societies where corruption soars high, and where explanations are hinged on the above three paradigms, one wonders how globalization can be seen as a process promoted by openness of countries to international trade, international investment and international mobilization of fund for development? This is because corruption rather stands as a colossus bridging the penetration of the goodies of globalization to “corruption – devastated” countries. More so, the effects are observed as the countries’ economies are reformed into consumerism by globalization programmes rather than reforming the economy to productivity (Aina, 1997; Garfinkel et al, 2004). The argument is that globalization programmes the economy to reform or be reformed. In an instance where there is polarization between few countries and groups that gain and the many countries and groups that lose out or are marginalized, then people from those economies whose access to the positive effects of globalization are blocked as a result of misprioritized policies, inordinate and passionate crave for wealth and structural strain innovate systems for survival. Some of these innovations include corruption, international fraud (419) etc.

The above is not to justify immoral behaviour and perversion of the nation’s laws, but to explain certain aberrant behaviours resulting from rapid social changes and the crisis inflicted by corruption on economic development. It underscores the notion that where corruption flourishes luxuriantly like bush and weeds, it takes the goodness from the soil and suffocates the growth of plants that were carefully and expensively bred and tended.

Another consequence of corruption is the problem of resource management – natural and human. Mismanagement of resources directly affects service delivery and good governance. These manifest in the poverty status of the nations, the living standard of the people and the human development index. Corruption-infested society scares foreign direct investment (fdi), demobilizes the speed of democratic processes and progress, institutes fear, tension and insecurity of lives and property, creates systems of selective application of justice in the society and a state of normlessness. It further deepens corruption and devastates the socio-psychological being of the people, especially where critical efforts are not made to curb the cancer. These entail negatively on the economic development of a country as much of the human resource

that is defined here as a development catalyst and facilitator of technology and information development is drained to countries where it is relevant.

Building Forces for Development and Challenges against Corruption

In order to build forces for sustainable development, mitigate the effects of the sociological and psychic challenges of corruption in the society and on the citizens, there is need to strategically develop programmes for the fight. Building challenges against corruption is a collective one. Its implications to national economic development of the developing economies have become a necessity in line with the globalization programmes that demand economic reforms. The following suggestions are therefore necessary.

African societies generally and Nigeria in particular should include a reappraisal of the traditional and cultural system of material and wealth acquisition in their economic reform agenda. The reform and attitudinal re-orientation are expected to reflect and re-socialize the populace thus extolling the sterling qualities and virtues of credibility, hard work, fairness, entrepreneurship, knowledge leadership, collective conscience, wealth creation and appreciation of integrity and honour.

Nigerian leadership in particular should endeavour to develop critical agenda and cooperation of traditional social organizations and voluntary agencies for micro-economic stability that engenders growth with equity and evolve sustainable human capital development in line with global demands. Nigeria should adopt the use of local or informal financial schemes and microfinance methodologies such as the 'Isusu' credit associations and individual and groups savings collection in micro-economic development. It should understudy this practice as it is done in Ghana (Dinye, 2006). It should also Institute policies that will check-mate structural poverty that is assumed to be both an effect and cause of corrupt practices in Nigeria and pursuit of democratic and good governance (Okunmadewa, 2001). Those charged with the welfare of the citizens and the nation should acquire knowledge leadership and authentic resource management strategies. Knowledge leadership is that critical leadership that has initiative, flexibility, explorative mind, competence, knowledge, etc. that can energize the nation's resources for development. It galvanizes the nation's operational packages to motivate citizens for development, entrepreneurship, patriotism and nationalism (Yalokwu, 2008; Iheriohanna, 2008). Apart from Nigeria, this has been the bane of critical knowledge leadership in Sudan and Zimbabwe. These cardinal issues are focal in the pursuit of good governance as they impinge on good management of resources.

The violation of laws remains a test case for their effectiveness and efficiency for cohesive living. Laws should be development-oriented. In this regard, the reforms should extend to the legal system. Again, the structures meant for fighting corruption such as the EFCC, ICPC, SERVICOM etc. should not be used for political vendetta. The anti-graft war should be total and holistic rather than impartial. It is only then that the exclusionist programmes of global economic policy will be eradicated. The necessity is that goods and human capital development will be universalized and the developing nations will avail themselves the opportunities for development.

The governments of Third World countries should adopt transparent approaches to processes. The role of the media in good governance should be acknowledged

and accommodated. This therefore, calls for an urgent and speedy passage of the Information Bill now with the National Assembly. Systems of checks and balances for monitoring public activities in the structure of governance are advocated. Participatory and people-driven governance and management of public resources should be encouraged. These will encourage accountability.

Concluding the Introduction

Corruption, especially in the Third World, is not a knotty virus. It is not exclusive to the Third World countries. It cuts across the globe. What is needed to fight it is a courageously determined government and knowledge leadership poised for the search for quality and excellence. Fight for corruption implies a sincere and collective effort, as it will be futile to deal with the symptoms of global or domestic corruption without attacking the problems of its roots. Committed fight based on the above views enlivens the world's commitment to cooperative efforts at dealing with the problems of poverty and uneven development necessitated by the great digital divide. It will also mitigate the observed brain drain that has cancerously characterized and, in effect, under-developing the developing economies of the South.

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