

LEADERSHIP, CORRUPTION AND NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Leadership failure and corruption have continued to feature prominently in the list of contributory factors that culminated into Nigeria's current poor developmental posture both in terms of nation building and socio-economic development. The two can be seen as complementary evils in view of the fact that one reinforces the other. In a sense, one can say that handling the country's developmental challenges in the face of these two complementary evils poses the puzzle of: Which came first – chicken or egg? Must corruption be eliminated before the country can expect quality leadership and good governance, or; must quality leadership be in place before corruption can be eliminated from the country's public sphere? By adopting a descriptive and analytical approach, this study investigates the trends of corruption in Nigeria and attempts to draw its connection to leadership failure. It is on this basis that the link between the two and the country's poor developmental record is highlighted. The stand taken here is that quality leadership must be in place in order to successfully prosecute any anti-corruption agenda and engender holistic development within the polity. This study concluded with strategies to be undertaken in order to eliminate the two complementary evils and set the country on a good pedestal for unfettered development.

Keywords: Leadership, corruption, nation building, development, political participation, accountability.

Introduction

Considering the immensity of her natural resources, one can posit that Nigeria has all it takes to be among the world's highly developed countries. Unfortunately, the country's developmental achievements still remain paltry and unsatisfactory. Poverty, unemployment, mortality rate, and living standards generally remain at highly alarming levels, which means that the quality of life of majority of Nigerian citizens is at a very low ebb. Nigeria has been experiencing an unsteady economic and developmental movement. The country had passed through the era of colonial exploitations and is still experiencing neo colonial exploitation. In effect, gaining of independence did not reverse or terminate the incident of exploitation. It only changed pattern. Thus, Nigeria has not worked for the generality of the Nigerian people.

The country has witnessed periods of boom as well as moments of austerity. Taking into account the amount of money that has passed through her coffers as well

as the quantity of resources exploited from the country, it makes sense to align with Okonjo-Iweala (2011) in explaining the ugly developmental image of the country on the grounds that the resources were and are still being poorly managed. To a large extent, this is the problem of leadership. A close look at the situation will reveal that corrupt practices are at the root of Nigeria's developmental problems. Thus, the statement that the Nigerian leaders have proven incapable of managing Nigeria's resources in the interest of the people can be rephrased by saying that the Nigerian leaders have proven incapable of eliminating corruption from the system in the interest of the people.

The idea being advanced in the paper is that the inability of Nigerian leaders to arrest the incident of corruption contributed to the developmental problems facing the country and unless this economic cankerworm is arrested, the country will continue to live in her current poor developmental status.

Literature Survey

The issue of leadership is one that generates serious interest both in terms of pedestrian usage and within scholarly circles. Bass (1990) presents us with the fact that more than 7,800 studies had already been conducted on the issue as at two decades ago. Undoubtedly, more researches have been conducted after this survey was taken. Indeed, the concept is such a commonly used term and the temptation is high for one to take it for granted that it can easily be defined or understood without much stress. A cursory glance at existing literature will expose the various definitions given by scholars in an attempt to capture what precisely the term represents. While, Baron and Greenberg (1990) define leadership as a process whereby one individual influences other group members towards the attainment of defined group, or organizational goals, Rost (1993) defines it as an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes, and Bowers and Seashore (1966) see it as behaviour that results in a difference in the behaviour of others.

Indeed, the definitions offered by writers such as Yukl (2010), Draft (2005) and a host of others share certain characteristics with the foregoing. One of the common strands running through the various definitions is that leadership involves influence. Implicit in this is that leadership is a relational concept to the extent that it involves the person(s) exerting the influence and those being influenced. That is to say, leadership involves leader(s) and followers. To a large extent, the notion of influence suggests the willingness of the followers to recognise and accept the authority of the leader over them.

A close look at the definitions offered above as well as numerous others not captured here will reveal that the scholars tend to have the 'role' of leadership at the back of their minds while offering their definitions. But given Edinger's (1975) definition of leadership, which captured it from either the behavioural or positional perspective, one can understand that aside looking at the behavioural order that qualifies leadership, it can equally be seen as relating to the rights and duties of an office or status in a hierarchical structure. It is a known fact that there are designated

leadership positions that can be occupied by anybody, including those that may not possess the qualities (behavioural attributes) needed to handle the leadership roles, depending on the pattern of ascendancy to that position. If someone occupying a leadership position, for instance, proves incapable of *influencing other group members towards the attainment of defined group, or organizational goals*, can we say that he is no longer a leader, or that he has become a follower? It is, perhaps, in the expectation that a leader should perform certain roles that we have such qualifiers as: good, bad, exceptional leader. Thus, a leader can be good or bad depending on his/her ability to perform the roles expected of a leader.

The typologies of leadership, as identified by different scholars, suggest that leadership may differ in terms of style, effectiveness, source of authority, and degree of influence it enjoys. The study conducted by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) exposes us to three types of leadership, namely: democratic, autocratic, and *laissez faire*. On his own part, Weber (1946) identified three types of leadership to include: Traditional, Charismatic, and Legal/Rational. On the other hand, Mooney and Reily (1939) made a classification of three leadership types to include titular, controller, and true organizer.

The *laissez faire* leader shares the same characteristics with a titular leader in the sense that both evoke the notion of someone that is not in charge of the situation. This, perhaps, is not the type of leader captured in the definitions above. In the same vein, the Autocratic leader and a Controller share similar attributes with regard to such leader's inability to delegate authority with subordinates. This kind of leader may not possibly find space and true relevance within a democratic setting. From the idea encapsulated in the notion of a Traditional leader, it stands to reason that someone can emerge as a leader simply because her/his ancestors occupied such a position and not necessary because s/he possesses the necessary personal qualities to occupy such a position.

Corruption is a universally known concept, though it has been described in various terms by different scholars. Todaro and Smith (2011, p. 546) explain corruption to mean the appropriation of public resources for private profit and other private purposes through the use and abuse of official power or influence. In their words, "corruption is the abuse of public trust for private gain; it is a form of stealing". While Otite (1986) sees it as the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favour or moral depravity, Osoba (2000) captures it as an anti-social behaviour that is inconsistent with the established legal norms and prevailing moral ethics of the land, which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators. Furthermore, Nnadozie (2003) views it as an act of omission or commission (by a public servant) that is capable of circumventing or perverting justice, fairness, integrity, morality and the rule of law.

It is pertinent to note that there are certain corrupt acts that involve not only public officials but also those that access public services. Thus, Ikejiani-Clark (1995, p. 142) sees it not only as "inducement by means of improper considerations to commit a violation of duty" but also "an inducement in cash or kind to secure services or goods from public officials or agencies through illegitimate or unlawful or

irregular means". In the same vein, Higgins (1958) describes it as stealing of public funds, receiving bribes, unjustly seeking gifts, monies or advantages other than the lawful salary, as well as offering gifts or advantages calculated to influence official acts and which constitutes an obstacle to equitable discharge of official duties. Thus, *offering or receiving* such gifts or advantages constitutes corruption.

As we can see, the keywords adopted by various scholars in defining the concept include abuse, pervasion, inducement, violation, stealing, depravity, bribes, illegitimate, antisocial, unjust, fraudulent, unlawful, etc. By implication, it is an act that is not acceptable to the society. It is in this regard that Wilkins (1970) stated that corruption can be seen as behaviour which is different from or conflicts with the standards that are accepted as normal within a group or social system. It is pertinent to note that corruption is related to exercise of power and abuse of it. That is, it involves using a position of authority to exact personal favours or inducing a public official to deviate from lawful standard in order to secure selfish advantages. To say the least, corruption is a dishonest act.

Development is a concept considered to be well known. However, capturing it in its exact sense has equally created some problems. It can be seen from the biological angle as well as social scientific perspective (Rodney, 1986). In the biological sense, it can be seen as a natural process through which living organisms transform from a simpler stage of infancy to a more complicated stage of maturity. In human beings for instance, this process involves increase in size (growth), cells, organs, and refinement in terms of ideas and behaviour. Seen from the social scientific perspective, it relates to societal transformations from a very simplistic stage to a higher stage of advancement. Being a natural phenomenon that has a relatively determinable pattern, the development in living organisms can be predictable when subjected to close study. The same cannot be said about the development of societies. While it is possible to state the age bracket within which a girl can attain puberty, it may prove totally impossible to determine the number of years it would take a developing society to get to an advanced developmental stage. While development in living organism such as human being is a continuous process, it is possible for a society that had attained a comparatively high level of development to slip off from the upper rungs of development and witness a reversal. This paper is concerned with the social scientific aspect of development.

Studies in development reveal that early writers had explained the concept from the economic sense whereupon certain economic variables are specifically isolated and primarily considered in measuring development. Referring this as the traditional perspective, Todaro and Smith (2011:14) presents the general idea as one that sees development in form of achieving sustained rates of growth of income per capita to enable a nation expand its output rate faster than the growth rate of its population. According to them, "levels and rates of growth of 'real' per capita **gross national income (GNI)**...are then used to measure the overall economic well-being of a population..." From this point of view, economic development has been typically seen in terms of the planned alteration of the structure of production and employment so that manufacturing and service industries would significantly overtake

agriculture's share of both. Rogers (1969) equally captured this dimension by explaining development from the standpoint of the efforts that culminate in producing high per-capita incomes and levels of living through more modern production methods and improved social organizations.

The danger, however, in this traditional view of development is that it appears not to be concerned about the qualitative aspects that touches on the well-being of the generality of the population. By adopting this standard of measurement, one can conclude that development is taking place by looking merely at national economies without bothering to know whether a substantial portion of the population is experiencing serious hardship and living in a state of dehumanising poverty. The new thinking in development studies, therefore, tries to avoid this mistake by placing the human conditions at the centre of whatever considerations or judgements being made in measuring development. It is in line with this that Seers (1972) tried to deemphasise the relevance of per capita income in assessing development and instead raised the critical questions that should act as a yardstick for measurement, and these revolve around the issue of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. His contention is that when these three critical elements have declined from high levels, it can be said that the society is developing. However, when one or two of these problems have been getting worse, it would appear strange to say that development is taking place. Discourses of scholars such as Ake (1995), Brinkman (1995), Gandhi (1996), Sen (1999), and a host of others have equally aligned with the idea of explaining development from a human-centred perspective vis-à-vis the living standards of citizens. World Bank (1991) has equally seen development essentially from the angle of improving the quality of life of individuals within the society. It is in the same vein that Todaro and Smith (2011, pp. 22-23) explain development as both a physical reality and a state of mind – made possible by the society securing the means of obtaining a better life for its citizens – hence, development must have at least the following three objectives: (a) To increase the availability and widen the distribution of basic life-sustaining goods; (b) raise levels of living and; (c) expand the range of economic and social choices. In a nutshell, development has to be measured with regard to people's quality of life and not in terms of national wealth.

Operational Explication of concepts

As we have seen, leadership has a relational connotation, as it involves exerting influence on others. Also, the term can be seen from the positional perspective whereupon the interest rests on the seat being occupied by the leader. On the other hand, it can equally be seen from the angle of the role being played by the leader or the behavioural attributes that characterize the person. For the purposes of this study, we are not assessing leadership from the positional perspective. Our interest here is to access the roles expected of a leader to play and the extent to which Nigerian leaders have been playing those roles. We are guided by the understanding that a leader has to be someone with the capacity to give direction; capacity to influence the followers towards the realization of set goals; and capacity to exhibit exemplary qualities that would guide his followers in their actions.

From the general view presented in the literature, it can be seen that corruption is a despicable act. By adopting certain terms such as illegitimate, antisocial, unjust, fraudulent, unlawful, violation, etc in describing the concept, it stands to reason that it is supposed to be unacceptable and quite condemnable within the society. In specific terms, it involves offering or receiving bribes, stealing of public funds, securing unjust and fraudulent benefits using one's position as a public official, perversion of justice, etc. That is to say, corruption is supposed to be an act that offends public standards. However, it is the opinion of many people that the incident has now become part of Nigeria's national culture owing to its pervasive nature in the country. Going by this position, one might be compelled to believe that the act is no longer being viewed as an antisocial behaviour in Nigeria or that it no longer offends public standards. Though the attitude of generality of Nigerians towards corruption appears as a confirmation of this belief, the stand taken in this paper is that the pervasiveness of an act does not take away its illegality – so long as it is not permitted by the law. Thus, all those acts prohibited by the law, as listed above, remain corrupt acts and are viewed as such in this paper notwithstanding the attitude of the generality of the masses towards it.

Having seen the perspectives from which the concept of development can be treated or understood, this study adopts the human-centred approach. That is to say, we measure development in terms of issues relating to whether poverty, unemployment, and inequality in the system are being drastically reduced and whether there is enough space for freedom and human rights as well as general improvement in the living standards of citizens.

Theoretical Background

This study is anchored on Leadership Theory. There are different approaches to the study of leadership and the Functional Approach is one of them. This approach focuses on the functions that a leader has to perform in order to justify his/her relevance in leadership position. Indeed, there are various types and strands of leadership theories, as can be seen from the works of Henry (2004), Dibia (2014), Onuoha (2013), and Rollinson (2008) and they inter alia include Style theories, which lay emphasis on the behaviour styles of leaders and its effect on followers/subordinates; Trait theory, which assumes that certain individuals possess peculiar personality characteristics that qualify them as leaders; as well as Contingency theories, which shares the idea that, in order to be effective, a leader is required to adopt an appropriate style of behaviour that suits the circumstances under which s/he finds herself/himself.

Perspectives on leadership have gone beyond looking at the leader's style, behaviour, or traits possessed by a leader, which qualifies him/her for leadership position. There has been a shift in thinking, as represented in the Transactional/Transformational approach to the study. The credit of coining the terms (transactional and transformational) goes to Burns (1978) in his bid to strike the difference between successful leadership in stable situations and successful leadership in changing times. Bass (1985) built on this foundation, as he identified two types of

leadership – Transactional and Transformational – and lists the four key characteristics that a Transformational leader should possess, which include: charisma, vision, ability to stimulate followers, and ability to care for their emotional needs. Inspirations from these contributions gave a fresh impetus to Max Weber's earlier notion of charismatic leader. However, this 'reborn' notion, as captured by House (1977), sees charismatic leaders as those that are capable of having a profound and extra-ordinary effect on their followers due to the force of their personal abilities. Such leaders have the ability to use their influence to cause their followers to accomplish outstanding feats. In sum, a transformational leader is one that has "vision of what needs to be done to cope with the situation, the ability to communicate this vision to followers and the capability to energise or inspire them to change their current way of doing things" (Rollinson, 2008, p. 377).

The view encapsulated in the Transitional leadership narrative is very relevant to this study because it will serve as a functional guide in determining the kind of leader required to combat the challenge of corruption and transform the country from its wobbly developmental status to a more advanced stage. It will equally be helpful in analysing the kind of political leadership operating within Nigeria's political system. It is quite agreeable that these onerous tasks of eliminating corruption and engendering development are achievable by a leader who, among others, is opposed to the status quo, possesses an idealized vision of the future, is expert in using unconventional means to transcend the existing order, is far more sensitive to the task environment, articulates goals strongly, and can transform people in a way that they become committed to the radical changes he or she advocates (Henry, 2004). Thus, the transformational leadership perspective will serve as the background upon which we make our analysis.

Nigeria and the Leadership Question

Nigeria is a country facing myriad of problems that, taken on the face value, appear insurmountable if judged from the manner in which such problems had persisted over the years and even assumed a worsening dimension with the passage of time. The issue of leadership is one that has been of great concern in the country. It is a commonplace knowledge that Nigeria has not been fortunate with the kind of leadership at her disposal. In fact, Achebe (1983, p. 1) heaped all the blames relating to the country's problems on leadership, as he stated that the "trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership". This leadership failure is not a recent development and its roots can be traced to the colonial era.

Leadership under the colonial period can be rated as a failure when weighed on the scale of determining the extent to which the interests of the local people were served and the immediate environment developed. Nnoli (2011, p. 30) aptly noted that morality, norms, values, customs and traditions, contractual obligations and other historical checks-and-balances that diluted power were conspicuously absent during the colonial era. In his words, "the colonial state structure was authoritarian, anti-democratic, domineering, exploitative, repressive, unjust and illegitimate". Most of the laws and policies formulated under colonial rule were considered obnoxious, as

they were aimed at repressing the people and ensuring domination over them. Hence, the local people saw the colonial power structure and the leadership it imposed on them as hostile and even illegitimate.

Based on the colonial tutelage, some of the tendencies considered to be obnoxious and against the tenets of good leadership stretched into the independence era under the incumbency of indigenous leaders. As Ihonvbere (2003) rightly observed, the indigenous elites that had been structurally incorporated into the power and economic networks of colonialism were nurtured in the context of undemocratic values, as exemplified by the manner many of them participated in the brutalization of their peoples and were rewarded with all sorts of decorations. Based on the fact that these elites lacked a viable base in production, they found themselves capturing political power without economic power. Hence, they saw unmediated control of state power as a means that would guarantee accumulation of wealth, survival, and domination. He summarized the consequences in the following words:

The new elite was thus forced to devise strategies of ideological containment, de-politicization, diversion, violence, and human rights abuses to ward off opposition. This situation in itself raised the premium on power to new and frightening proportion. To capture, control and effectively deploy political power therefore, villages were raided, taxes imposed, communities were punished for not voting rightly, and suspects or enemies of the state were found in all nooks and corners of the society (Ihonvbere (2003, p. 196).

Political activities that took place towards the end of the colonial period, within the first republic, and even afterwards bore clear testimonies to the picture created above. The pattern of struggle for political leadership clearly indicated that the basic interest of the political actors was something other than offering leadership in the real sense of the word. Parochialism affected the leadership that operated within the independence era. Agara (2015, p.89) confirms that the prior preoccupation of politicians from the early days of independence “was to use the political apparatus for their own personal gains or those of their families, ethnic or tribe”.

The leaders did little or nothing to contain the seeds of ethnic divisions orchestrated by the colonialist’s divide-and-rule policy and, as such, failed to mobilize all the sections of the country towards forming a spirit of nationhood and showing sincere commitment to a truly national project. Those that ought to serve as national leaders took steps that militated against all-inclusive governance, which placed them in the mould of sectional leaders or *national leaders with strong sectional leaning*. Those that ever emerged as charismatic leaders did so with very strong ethnic leanings. For instance, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, and Alhaji Ahmadu Bello occupied the political space within their time as leaders of regional-based political parties. As a result, it became an uphill task for the Nigerian peoples from the different ethnic groups to accept, as Amoda (1972, p.171) rightly stated, “the replacement of the British by a leader from a group which may have been

a political **enemy** or at least from a **foreign** distant group” (emphasis mine). This leadership problem has continued to linger and Offiong (2010, p. 26) observed this by positing that “Nigeria has not been blessed with a charismatic leader capable of cementing together diverse heterogeneous communal groups in the country”.

It is agreeable that it was the leadership crises generated by civilians that gave the military reason to intervene in politics few years after the country gained her independence. Unfortunately, the country’s leadership under the military regime eventually got trapped in the same web of leadership problems that brought down the civilian government. As a matter of fact, the military leadership not only failed to fill the gap that they gave as the reason for their intervention but also created more problems along the line. They suddenly developed parochial interest in the paraphernalia of political office (and this led to coups and counter-coups), reinforced ethnic identifications, militarized the society, and constituted further obstacle to the formation of democratic culture through their long stay in power.

The problems of political succession and political instability that had characterized the Nigerian political environment are part of the signs of leadership failure. It sounded like a big achievement when, in 2007, Nigeria conducted the third presidential election in a succession and witnessed a civilian-to-civilian handover. That was almost forty seven years after the country gained her independence.

The conduct of successive Nigerian leaders has not portrayed them in the image of those that live above board and who could be emulated. From the political perspective, the civilians among them have not given a good account of their stewardship, as they had at one point or the other engaged in political malpractices such as election rigging, harassment of opposition, etc. Their military counterparts cannot be exemplary because the means through which they emerged is illegal – democratically speaking. In terms of financial dealings, they have taken steps that portrayed them as directly engaging in, or failing to fight financial malpractices. When we talk of nepotism and favouritism, embezzlement, and other ills that characterize the country, they are acts that flow from the end of the leadership. By highlighting some salient characteristics possessed by successive Nigerian leaders, which include selfishness, arrogance, corruption, callousness, opportunism, greed, and ethnic centeredness, Ibaba and Okoye (2015) drew the conclusion that Nigeria has been operating with psychopathic leaders.

There is no better indicator to confirm that Nigeria has been faced with leadership failure than the state of social infrastructure within the country vis-a-vis her immense natural resources. The next indicator is the continued existence of ethnic hatred and divisive competition among the different groups. Undoubtedly, the gap was created by the absence of quality leadership that could tap the country’s resources for the betterment of the lives of Nigerian citizens; absence of leadership that could galvanize all the sections of the society and reorient them towards unity and regenerative competition so as to promote the national developmental projects.

Discourse on Corruption in Nigeria

The incident of corruption in Nigeria is indeed very high and had gotten to the current magnitude through a gradual and progressive process. Though there is the belief in some quarters that the incident began to manifest in Nigeria during the independence era, some other scholars insist that it is traceable to the colonial period. Writers like Osoba (2000) actually believe that colonialism in itself is an embodiment of corruption to the extent that it was rooted in a fraudulent system of accumulation that benefitted the colonizers to the detriment of the colonized. This point of view falls in line with that of Rodney (1986) and Nnoli (2011, p.177) given their positions about the exploitative nature of the regime and that “an important aspect of exploitation is corruption”. Yaqub (2003) equally believes that colonialism was a corrupted form of government, on the grounds that it was set up without the consent of the governed.

Aside indicting colonial system of government generally as being a corrupt system vis-à-vis its pattern of accumulation and transfer of wealth from one side of the globe to another, Ajayi (2003) succinctly points accusing fingers on certain classes of indigenous peoples that served the colonial regime for engaging in acts that amounted to abuse of their official position for private gains. Those that can comfortably be listed under this class include the Warrant Chiefs, Interpreters, and Court clerks, as well as other public servants that were later introduced to corrupt practices. Though they were mostly believed to be politically motivated, Yaqub (2003), Mbakwe (1989), and Abutudu (2003) equally pointed out cases of allegations and official attempts to unravel the incident of corruption within the colonial period, as exemplified by the Nicholson Report, Forster-Sutton Commission, as well as the Eastern Regional Government Commission of Inquiry.

Agreed that corrupt practices must have existed during the colonial era, it is a fact that the incident got so pronounced within the independence era and got to alarming proportion as the country advanced in age. As noted by Adamolekun (2006), certain positive norms inherited from the colonial era were still being respected during the immediate years after independence, at least by civil servants. Political corruption, which Ojo (2003) explained to include electoral fraud as well as the rewarding of specific constituencies by political parties for electoral support, appeared to be the aspect of corruption that had taken off immediately after independence was granted. From the account of Moveh (2014), the incident of political/electoral corruption manifested glaringly in the first general elections conducted in 1964.

The military regime that eventually emerged escalated the incident of corruption and expanded its scope to cover such issues as “subversion of administrative processes through such means as manipulating Tendering and Contract procedures, political intrusion and distortion of the internal management of statutory corporations, influencing and distorting personnel processes, etc” (Odum and Onyekwelu, 2013, p.128). Having earlier cited the case of Scania and Cement Armada, Nnoli (2011, p. 207) indicated in specific terms that “Gowon dictatorship

was the first regime to introduce corruption into Nigeria on a large scale". From then on, the incident began to grow by leaps and bounds. Despite the fact that stamping out corruption had remained on the top agenda of successive regimes, the scope and dimension of corrupt practices ended up widening.

Corruption has become so endemic in the country that most people now see it as a way of life (Bakare, 2015). Achebe (1983, p.38) captured a newspaper article that stated thus: "Keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is like keeping a goat from eating yam". Given the situation and against the backdrop that Wilkins (1970) has seen corruption as acts that conflicts with standards accepted as normal within the society, it seems that corruption has become acceptable in Nigeria and instead, what appears to be in *conflict with acceptable standards*, these days, is refusal to engage in corruption; refusal to play the ball.

Indeed, the two dimensions of corruption captured by Mishra (2003), which include the exploitative and collusive corruption, are well entrenched in the country. In the light of the fact that reporting mechanisms and structure for sanctioning public officers that exploit the masses are defective, the latter have learnt to (either fearfully or willingly) comply or collude with corrupt public officials to undermine the system. This situation has further degraded the value of accountability and condemnation of corrupt practices, which made it possible for the society to publicly celebrate corrupt individuals, as exemplified by the case of Bode George (jailed on grounds of corruption) who was given a rousing welcome by his people after he finished serving his jail term.

Going beyond the rhetoric of condemning corruption and promising to stamp it out, successive administration has set up different agencies at various times to fight the incident of corruption. Unfortunately, these attempts have not succeeded in tackling the problem. According to Sha (2016, p.10), there are complaints and allegations that "these agencies lack the political will to frontally confront corruption and... are not transparent in their conducts". Ehwarieme (2003, p.151) captured the dilemma facing the country in terms of the various anti-corruption agencies thus: "One of the greatest dilemmas in Nigeria is that one set of corrupt and inefficient officials or institutions are expected to ensure that another set are not". In view of this, the country is still being weighed down by the cancerous social ailment and an end to it appears not to be in sight yet.

Issues on Nigeria's Development

The journey towards Nigeria's development had started on the note of distortions and has been tortuous. The grounds covered so far still remain largely unimpressive. Like other countries that experienced colonialism, her pre-colonial developmental process was arrested, stagnated, and diverted by the incident of colonialism. The colonial masters imposed the developmental model and structure that suited colonial interests, which was entirely different from the ones that had existed. For instance, "the colonialists decided what crops were needed in the European industries and if they were already produced in Nigeria they encouraged increased production. If not, and the conditions were favourable, they introduced

them from outside” (Nnoli, 2008, p. 75).

To the extent that colonialism was not introduced in the primary interest of the indigenous peoples but for the purposes of exploitation (Nnoli, 2011; Rodney, 1986), it stands to reason that it did not serve the primary developmental needs of the indigenous peoples. Perhaps, whatever ‘development’ that seems to have occurred must have been seen from the traditional economic sense of development. This is, especially, in view of the fact that the colonialists offered only the aspect of ‘development’ tailored towards extracting raw materials and facilitating the exploitation process (Davies, 1961; Kautsky, 1972).

The gaining of independence offered great hopes and started with grand developmental plans. However, the hopes were eventually dashed, as the plans ended up not transferring the country into a developed state. In line with the situation painted by Ajayi (quoted in Ofuebe, 1998, p. 89), “the optimism of development plans of the 1960s has given way to increasing frustration in the 1970s and disillusionment in the 1980s”. Given the present situation in the country, one may add that there is a swelling feeling of despondency among the people. As the country advanced in age, quality of life continued to deteriorate. This can be seen from very simple indices like purchasing power and exchange rate of naira to the dollar. For instance, one thousand naira purchase today delivers less items compared to what was obtainable about ten or twenty years ago. Prior to mid eighties, naira was stronger and had a higher exchange rate than the dollar. The trend began to reverse eventually and the value of naira continued to decline to the extent of getting beyond N400/USD1 in recent times. In terms of more qualitative yardsticks, poverty level continued to increase, unemployment level continued to multiply, and living standards continued to nose-dive. This is pathetic, especially, in view of the immense resources at the disposal of the country.

Promises and efforts to lift the country off her developmental quagmire never succeeded in yielding positive results. The 1980s, for instance, witnessed the introduction of austerity measures and Structural Adjustment Programmes but these and other approaches (both foreign and locally motivated) never succeeded in yielding positive results. The country continued witnessing deepening developmental crisis and is still wriggling in the throes of deplorable state of basic infrastructure. Currently, Nigeria is going through economic crisis that has subjected the people to excruciating hardship. This is demonstrated by the increasing number of people suffering frustration and even committing suicide at present. Leadership Newspapers (2016) captures the Nigerian Police as saying that sixty two Nigerians had committed suicide within a period of six months, stating that the phenomenon was a very rare and obscure phenomenon in the country – until the recent period of economic recession.

The Nexus

Whether it is the exploitative or the collusive corruption, the fact remains that the incident is very high in Nigeria and that they all bother on mismanagement/embezzlement of public funds, extortion of money, or wilful

collusion between public officials and private individuals to undermine the system. Delivery of developmental projects and programmes is a capital-intensive process. In the face of the numerous competing societal needs and developmental challenges facing the government, it has to be admitted that wastages and profligacy associated with corruption are capable of depleting and liquidating the scarce resources and financial energy needed to drive the cart of development. Hence, Bakare (2015) submits that corruption constitutes obstacle to economic progress. Equally, Todaro and Smith (2011) recognise that elimination of corruption is important for development. According to Osinibi (2014, p. 98), corruption “causes the distortion and diversion of government welfare programmes in addition to undermining the goals of development”. Ibaba and Okoye (2015) also assert that poor development is a logical outcome of high level of corruption. These positions can be clearly understood in view of the fact that the various forms of corruption that manifest in the country is counterproductive and limits the chances of realizing developmental goals.

For instance, inflation of contract sums, authorizing/making payments for unexecuted projects, initiating white-elephant projects for the sole purpose of benefitting from the contract sum, etc, are corrupt practices that drain the government treasury and which translate to high government spending while achieving no meaningful results. Charging of unapproved levies/rates, extortions, and demands for bribery as a precondition for rendering public services are equally corrupt practices and this category “reduces the availability and increases the cost of basic social services” (Sondhi, 2003, p.224), which is capable of further impoverishing the poor victims and widening the circle of poverty. Corrupt practices like printing and issuance of fake government receipts/vouchers, granting of unapproved tax reliefs, and undervaluing of public properties in return for bribes are acts that limit the revenue accruable to the government. Award of contracts to middlemen that eventually sell the contract papers to the actual contractors, award of contracts that are not meant to be executed (on the grounds of political patronage), as well as other related corrupt acts are such that not only deplete government revenue but also encourages laziness and unproductive attitude within the system. Nepotism/favouritism encourages abuse of personnel management processes and promotes mediocrity, which prevents the country from having the right calibre of staff that could enthrone a highly efficient public sector. In the same vein, construction and approval of low quality projects as well as other related corrupt acts amount to wasteful spending since such projects would last for only a short period, thereby defeating the essence of delivering them in the long run – otherwise, the government will keep handling or reconstructing such projects over and over again. In effect, all these and other related corrupt acts clog the wheel of development. Fighting them would lead to efficient management of scarce resources for the achievement of maximum results, create the right environment for empowering and encouraging the poor to escape the web of poverty, expand the revenue base and problem-solving capacity of the government, eliminate laziness and promote productive/competitive spirit among citizens, encourage the engagement of the right calibre of staff that could drive development programmes, and eliminate wasteful spending on the part of

government.

Having been able to establish a link between the high level of corruption existing in Nigeria and the country's unimpressive developmental status, the next task here is to draw a connection between leadership failure and the high incident of corruption. Discourses on Gaetano Mosca's view on Elite Theory and Roberto Michels' concept of iron law of oligarchy, as presented by Varma (2004, p. 146), reveal that the strength of the elite over the masses lay in the fact that the latter usually exhibit characteristics of being unorganized, apathetic, indolent, and incapable of self-government and this explains why the class that is ruled always finds itself being "directed and controlled" by the class that rules. By implication, the leader is expected to direct and control and should actually be in charge.

As already identified, the task of leadership is to inspire, influence and direct the followers towards the realization of set goals. The problem of corruption and poor level of development in Nigeria has gotten to a crises level and which requires drastic measures to handle. As Adamolekun (2002) rightly observed, the quality of leadership needed in a developing country is such that should be development oriented. To the extent that moving a country from a lower level of development to a higher level – with significant improvement on basic social infrastructure, reduced incident of corruption, poverty, and other related ills – is a transformational task, it can only take a transformational leader to direct the trajectory of Nigeria's development towards the right course. Unfortunately, such calibre of leadership has proven to be a scarce commodity within the Nigerian State. According to Ibaba and Okoye (2015, p. 162), starting from the point of independence that took place in 1960, "the Nigerian leadership has demonstrated a high sense of profligacy and kleptocracy that has hindered national development" and as a matter of fact "misused every opportunity the country had to fast track development". As such, Bass (1985) opines that Nigerian leaders lack the charisma to stimulate followers. They cannot also be said to have the emotional needs of the people at heart – since they (leaders) have demonstrated the willingness to sacrifice the well-being of the people at the altar of parochial interests.

There is no gainsaying the fact that it is the leadership that defines the status quo. As already noted, the leaders started perpetrating political corruption right from the First Republic. The tenure of Aguiyi-Ironsi lasted briefly and was succeeded by Gowon whose regime set the pace for high-level corruption, which continued to expand in dimension, style and proportion with each passing day. As a matter of fact, all the Nigerian leaders (both past and present) have been identified with one form of corruption or the other. Against this backdrop, one may begin to understand why all the promises and anti-corruption agencies geared towards arresting the ill have failed to yield meaningful results. In summary, Nigeria has not been able to take a giant developmental stride owing to the inability of the leadership to arrest the major evil that has continued to weigh down the country. Rather than influence, direct and mobilize the people towards eliminating corruption and facilitating development, the successive leaders always appear to be overwhelmed by the monster they had come to arrest.

Concluding Remarks

Nigeria's path to development has been bogged down by high level of corruption. This explains why the country has not been able to rise above its current poor status despite the resources at her disposal. The task of overcoming the malaise and engendering positive and sustainable development requires a transformational leader. However, the search for such a leader has continued to prove elusive within the Nigerian state. The greater problem even lies in the fact that it might prove difficult for the country to raise such a leader based on certain reasons such as ethnic problems, which have generated mutual suspicion, hatred, and unproductive competition among the groups and have continued to intervene seriously in the people's political choices. It is quite agreeable that many a great number of Nigerians place higher premium on sectional and ethnic considerations over and above integrity and proven track records when making choices among political aspirants.

Besides, money politics stands as obstacle for people with genuine interests and intentions to emerge as leaders and offer qualitative leadership. This is to the extent that such people may not be willing to spend their hard earned money on buying gift items/distributing cash to the electorate in order to be voted for. It is equally most unlikely that such people would like to be sponsored by corrupt individuals. The only way such individual can emerge, perhaps, is to play the fox, pretend to be flowing with the trend, emerge as a leader, and then 'renege' on the expectations of his/her corrupt sponsors (that are most likely to be opposed to positive change and elimination of corruption from the system).

In the final analysis, it is the leadership that sets the pace for others to follow. As a necessary first step, any leader intending to lift Nigeria from its low state of development to a higher status must eliminate corruption. In doing this, the character and actions of the leader must be seen to be directed truly towards achieving positive results. Thus, s/he should not only try to live above board but should actually be seen by the people to be living above board. As such, any leader fighting corruption must avoid corrupt acts and lead by example. The incumbent President, for instance, appears to be having serious challenge in this regard because he got into power waving unverified credentials of impeccable character and riding on the back of high-sounding promises about his strong anti-corruption stance. However, his actions after being sworn in appear to be in discordant tune with impressions and promises linked to him during the campaign periods. Contrary to the claims that he had no landed property at Abuja and that he would publicly declare his assets if he won the elections, it was discovered that the claims were false. And he never made his asset-declaration public. Worse still, he failed to present the GCE certificate, which he claimed he possessed, and rather hired lawyers to help handle the matter. All these actually began to dampen his image and perceived sincerity. This is coupled with the fact that most people from different sections of the country have started seeing him as a person that unapologetically engages in favouritism and nepotism as well as being ethnic minded.

Even when a leader has demonstrated to have a high profile in terms of ethical standards and uprightness, s/he must ensure that her/his family members and

close associates accused of corruption are made to face the music. This is one sure way of raising danger signal to 'outsiders' and the generality of citizens. Again, the incumbent president has sent a wrong signal in this regard. This is especially with regard to the manner the present administration is handling the Halliburton scandal. The general impression is that the matter is being swept under the carpet because his wife and other powerful (untouchable) individuals were allegedly linked to the scandal. Besides, his close associates within the ruling party appear to be receiving preferential treatment over the war against corruption.

The 'Budget Padding' scandal is yet another issue that has put the sincerity of the current administration to test. No one is yet to be punished or publicly quizzed about the incident – the way the presidency is pursuing its allegations over the 'forgery of Senate rules'. The current war against corruption appears to be directed at only those opposed to the president, especially those that participated actively under the regime of the immediate past president. The impression that past military leaders are untouchable with regard to charging them for corruption still holds sway. In the midst of all these, the anti corruption agencies still operate as the attack dogs of the president or anti-opposition (rather than anti corruption) establishment. These, perhaps, could be the reason the social media has been awash with a corrupted version of the newly introduced Change-slogan and instead of 'Change begins with me', people are circulating: 'Change begins with you, not me'.

In a bid to fight corruption with sincerity and lift the barrier blocking the country's development, it is important to note that war against corruption should not be personalised but rather institutionalised. The anti-corruption institutions must be independent bodies and must be seen as unbiased agencies of government. A leader is actually deemed to be influencing his followers into corruption when they perceive him/her as being corrupt or selective in the fight against corruption. And this has been the fate of Nigeria. So, long as this continues, so long as Nigeria would remain in her poor developmental status.

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