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Abstract: *Nigeria's nascent democracy has resulted in the transformation of some facets of the society. The economy is one of the major beneficiaries of civil rule with remarkable growth resulting in the recent GDP rebase. Despite the GDP rebase other sectors are witnessing stagnation and reversal of growth. For many, real income are still higher than they were two decades ago yet the quality of life has not improved. As such health prospects are poorer, malnourishment is widespread and unemployment acute. Yet, the incidence of hunger, disease and poverty are prevalent. The major culprit which has been blamed for the lack of progress is corrupt practices. Corruption has been blamed for the failure of people to reap the dividends of democracy. The assumption of the people is that democracy will usher in an era where food and all necessary amenities are provided for the people. Despite improvements in GDP growth corruption undermines gains of economic growth. In real term, poverty has continued with vast majority of the people still living below the poverty line. Poverty alleviation is a herculean task for government as there are several forces militating against change. Therefore there are paradoxes of stupendous wealth and extreme poverty, economic growth and depletion of natural resources all reenacting the 'boom' and 'doom' circle. I conclude that for the people to derive the dividends of democracy there should be a socially inclusive growth where rent seeking activities leading to poverty for the vast majority of the people is repudiated.*

Key words: *Democracy, Economic growth, Poverty, Corruption, Sustainable Development*

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1. Introduction

Many reasons have been advanced as undermining development of democracy but prominent amongst them is the scourge of corruption. Corruption has been the bane of legitimacy, democratic stability and socio-economic and political development in Nigeria. Indeed, any attempt to understand the trajectory of development and the challenges to democracy in Nigeria must come to grips with the problem of corruption and stupendous wastage of scarce resources. All attempts by successive regimes to nip the problem in the bud have failed. Regrettably, virtually all the leaders who have come in as physicians have left office as patients (Ogundiya, 2009). As a result, Nigeria today is at a critical stage since independence, where corruption has magnified unfettered with President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's administration.

To illustrate the torturous trajectory of democracy in Nigeria and to show how corruption undermined alleviating poverty, I shall undertake the definition of the concepts and the theoretical framework. Thereafter, causes of poverty in Nigeria would be highlighted which

underscore the institutionalization of corruption. Challenges of poverty to the development of democracy will form my major discourse while the way forward and conclusion will form the final part of the paper.

2. Theoretical Framework

The state is central to any analysis of corruption in Africa. Indeed, there is virtually no subject that one considers in Africa without emphasizing the role of the state (Osaghae 1988). This is so because the state not only leads, it also embodies the society in Africa. One fundamental fact to note from the onset is that the Nigerian state, like most African states and low income countries is a product of colonialism. It is not surprising therefore that many theorists of African politics trace the problem of political corruption to the debauchery of colonial rule (Onimode, 1983; Ekeh, 1985; Osaghae 1988 Ake. 1996). Among the theories of African politics that has helped in the understanding of Africa's predicaments, and more importantly the issue of endemic corruption, include theory of two publics developed by Peter Eke, Prebendalism popularized by Richard Joseph. Others have depicted Africa as a rentier, patrimonial and neo-patrimonial state. These theories are credible not only in the understanding of the state and its predicaments in the African countries but also in providing important explanations for the pandemic corruption ravaging African countries.

However, I shall adopt the theory of the two public of Ekeh. Ekeh (1975, 1985) argues that one of the most striking impacts of colonialism was the emergence of two public realms, the primordial and civic public realms which related differently with the private realm in terms of morality. For Nigeria, and generally for Africa, as Ekeh (1975) suggests; only rights (i.e. benefits) are expected from the state by its citizens, who owe duties (responsibilities) to a native sector. The former forms the basis of an "amoral civic public realm", and the latter a "moral primordial public realm". Therefore, the civic public realm is associated with illegitimate and exploitative colonial rule and had no moral linkages with the private realm. It is in the amoral public realm in which cheating the system was considered a patriotic duty. The result is that as the same actors operate in the two realms, the state apparatus is employed to fatten the nest of the primordial public, thereby making corruption, nepotism and ethnicity to mention a few the hallmark of the civic public (Osaghae, 1988).

As Ekeh concretely puts it:

A good citizen of the primordial public gives out and asks for nothing in return; a lucky citizen of the civic public gains from the civic but enjoys escaping giving anything in return whenever he can. But such a lucky man would not be a good man were he to channel all his lucky gains to his private purse. He will only continue to be a good man if he channels part of the largesse from the civic public to the primordial public. That is the logic of the dialectics. The unwritten law of the dialectics is that it is legitimate to rob the civic public in order to strengthen the primordial public (Ekeh, 1975, p.108).

In fact, the primordial sentiment is nothing but an instrument of political deception, trickery and manipulation in the hands of the privileged political and bureaucratic elite for personalizing public wealth with less for group benefits. Though some of the ill gotten wealth may trickle down to the primordial public in this process, as Ekeh also documented, it is undoubtedly

insignificant to strengthen it, more particularly if strengthening in this sense is construed in terms of social, economic and political development.

Few scholars are likely to dispute Richard Joseph's linking of corruption and the fall of the Nigerian Second Republic to the prebendalisation of state power. In what seem to be a re-characterization of Ekeh's theory, Joseph contends that "The politics of competition over allocation of resources, or what in Nigeria is called 'the national cake', has its most dire consequences: the transformation of the offices of the state into prebends..." According to the theory of prebendalism, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by office holders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups. Therefore, Nigerian political culture is hinged on prebendal politics which further enhances our understanding of the prevalence of political corruption. The pursuit of politics is intended to appropriate the political space and resources among fractions of the political elite. The Nigerian state also has a patrimonial and neo-patrimonial character. Patrimonialism means that the distinctions between the public and the private domains have become blurred and power, which has become a major source of wealth, has become personalized. Within this framework of analysis, the behaviour of political elite in Africa is linked to traditional value system. The African society is patriarchal where political power is personalized, and leadership is permanent in the context of self-recruited oligarchy. As Seteolu (2005) concretely puts it:

These socially imbibed values are replicated in the political terrain where contending coalitions accumulate resources to offset side payments required to retain or expand followership in the context of power politics. The fierce struggle in the public space is linked to conflicts that characterize leadership succession in traditional political systems and the attractions of political control where party politics guarantee access to wealth and economic power.

Therefore, the political elite use social identities such as ethnicity for particularistic purpose. The ethnic identity becomes a mobilizing mechanism to access political power, consolidate dominance and economic control (Dudley 1973; Osaghae 1995). Consequently, it is not impossible for power to be used for personal or group aggrandizements. In patrimonial societies, corruption seems to be intrinsic part and parcel of the political culture.

Neopatrimonialism, a related term to prebendalism and new form of Patrimonialism is a term used to describe and explain state failures in Africa. It is a term used to describe patrons using state resources in order to secure the loyalty of clients in the general population, and is indicative of informal patron-client relationships that can reach from the very high up in state structures down to individuals in the lower levels (like in the small villages). "As a result of that kind of patron-client or identity politics, Nigeria has regularly been one of the lowest ranked nations for political transparency by Transparency International (TI) in its corruption perception Index" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neopatrimonialism>).

A soft state whether democratic or undemocratic is bedeviled with the inability to institute reforms or enforce social discipline. It is a state where the legal system and its paraphernalia are moribund or at least ineffective. Even when framing policies, the authorities (under the control of politico-bureaucratic elite) are reluctant to place obligations on the people, especially in matters of corruption (Myrdal 1968: 101). A soft state in Golthorpe (1975) definition is

... one in which formal rules (laws, officially stated administrative rules and practices, etc) are applied copiously and in a lax manner rather than vigorously and consistently...it is one in which private advantage can be gained and private bargains struck concerning the enforcement or non enforcement of the rules, as when a businessman bribes a tax official...Besides money, another inducement is kinship sentiment and another is the favour of superiors (Golthorpe, 1975, p. 265

Therefore, one of the damaging consequences of the politics of identity is that it tends to render the state soft. Laws are discriminately applied and the anti-corruption laws are not an exception. Therefore, one of the characters of a soft state is its over-permissiveness of corruption and corrupt acts.

Democracy in Nigeria is at best a representation of the crude and vicious mix of licentious and vulgar concepts of democracy. It is an ideology and regime of insanity where the 'rule of law' is replaced by the rule of barbarism, rascality and brutality (Dunkor, 2011). This is because of the atavistic class hegemony of the ruling elite in Nigeria. Class hegemony in Nigeria today is the highest and final stage of misrule and corruption just as its concomitant and equivalent socio-political transformation; neo-colonialism is the highest form of imperialism (Dunkor, 2011). Class interest is oppression and a tyranny of the minority against majority. Stemming from this, the Nigerian political landscape is fettered, filled with values, gutters and bobby traps which Dunkor termed 'Bunker democracy' in that it is a harvest of freedom without human value, milk of liberty and equity, sine qua non of democracy.

3. Challenges of Poverty and corruption to the Democratization of Nigeria

According to Max Weber, "there are two ways of doing politics. Either one is living for politics or one lives from politics." In Nigeria, the political class lives from politics and to maintain their lives, they must destroy the source of wealth. All they want is rent from petroleum resources. They do not even need the people to extract taxes from. Political sociologists tell us that whenever the state essentially relies on taxation the question of democracy becomes an unavoidable issue, and a strong current in favour of democracy inevitably arises. To be able to collect taxes effectively, the state must demonstrate that it represents the common good and build legitimacy. The only concern of our rulers is to plunder state resources for their personal use and for their external benefactors.

Bad governance over the years has deprived Nigerians of the dividends of democracy. It is the objective of the government of Nigeria to tap through democratic process, the energy and creative talents of the people and harness the nation's resources to enhance the welfare of the citizenry. This is with a mission to create a dynamic economy and establish a free, democratic and just society through the pursuit of people-oriented programmes. The envisioned process will facilitate and consistently cultivate a style of governance that places premium on openness, transparency and accountability, probity and effective leadership. However, these goals are not attainable in that the ruling class has other agenda for democratic dividends. In this neo-patrimonial state, the politico-bureaucratic elite carefully selected by the elsewhere colonial overlords are native agents of capital. These agents of neo-colonial capitalism turn their backs on creating social overhead capital thereby ensuring that 'multinational profit hyenas' (Transnational Corporations) and 'wicked machines of imperialism' i.e. Breton wood organizations (Banjo 2000) perfect the marketization of the country' and dependency on the metropolis. This unequal bi-modal system tied the interest of the country to foreign capital and

turned the country into a rentier State.

The result is that the country is currently operating an 'insecure based democracy' which Dunkor's categorize as 'bunker democracy'. A condition where the masses and the electorate who are in constant fear, scamper for safety while the politicians armed with thugs trotting rifles, bombs and machetes are in pursuit of naked and inordinate power. Indeed, the state is a maze of antinomies of form and context where electoral malfeasance and larceny are the order of the day.

Generally, class interest is the bane of Nigerian. It must be emphasized that it is class determination that informs the outcome of issues and policies as well as socio-political problems like robbery, kidnapping and embezzlement as class content and expression takes various extraordinary forms. The political class, leeches and parasites of society recycle greed, corruption, insecurity and disunity to subordinate the people's aspirations to their pecuniary needs. As leeches they seek the blood of the people and perch on power endlessly for their selfish pursuits. This is why democracy has not only exacerbated people's suffering and poverty but is seen by the lower and middle class as a class war against the upper class and those in power who have expropriated surplus value to their foreign accounts in the citadels of capital. The attendant consequences of armed robbery and kidnapping rampant in the country today is a desperate act by the lower class to rescue what is left of the democratic dividends. Additionally, the ruling elite cut in the cross fire of intra class struggle also have recourse to using the lower class to wrestle power from their political opponents.

Contrary to liberal orthodoxy, democracy in the Third World is not an 'open sesame' where democratic dividends as in providing the enabling environment for people to attain higher standard of living is actualized. Given that corruption is epidemic, endemic and cancerous in Nigeria and is a major force behind poverty based democracy any meaningful development is not achievable. It is the driving force behind all class consciousness and hegemony of the ruling class.

Corruption in Nigeria comes in different shapes, guises and forms. All attempts at reconfiguring the political and social space of the country cannot be achieved without putting in place forces that can checkmate the elaborate process of expropriation. The ruling class views Nigeria as their prebends and must derive benefit from the 'national cake'. To perfect their expropriation, the citizenry are not only marginalized but are most importantly pauperized and tied to their apron string thereby ensuring perpetual subordination to the national bourgeoisie.

This is why democratization in Nigeria is a weather vane blown in whatever direction our political and bureaucratic elites dictate. Very crucial to our understanding of the challenges of poverty to democratization process is the dwindling performance of the manufacturing sector. 'The lack or absence of necessary infrastructure has led to the declining fortunes of industries which invariably has accelerated poverty in the country. With democratization, it was perceived conducive environment for manufacturing industry such as appropriate economic policies that are growth oriented; political stability which undermines continuity in development plans and strategies are put in place. However, there has been a dearth of Foreign Capital Investment (FDI) as most industries, like Michelins, Guinness Nig. Plc and a host of others have relocated to Ghana. Deriving from this deindustrialization, there is weak private sector, and declining internal revenue base and an over dependency on oil as our foreign exchange earner. In general, the running elite led by the president placed much premium on pillage for power longevity agenda than in formulating a pro-poor policy. Even when such strategies are put in place in the so called

transformation agenda, extraneous forces and ethnic groupings subvert national agenda for their primordial interest. Eke (1995) presciently captures this when he asserts that because their development paradigm largely ignored the specificity and historicity of African countries, it put them in position where everything was relevant to them and nothing was uniquely significant for understanding them. In fact, the sharing of the 'national cake' in Nigeria has been the mainspring of all inequality and poverty in the country. A case in point is the missing \$20 billion mismanaged at NNPC. Despite public outcry, the fund was not recovered. Instead of praising the whistle blower, the only causality is the else while Central Bank of Nigeria governor who was dropped for leaking the information to the press.

If politics is defined from Harold Lasswell tradition of "who gets what, when and how" and perhaps how much then the struggle over resource allocation in Nigeria has heightened the Pauperization of the masses. Since the sharing of 'national cake' has taken depilating dimension permitting all forms of corruption. Every political issue is tied to who gets what, when and how. The idea that the national cake is meant to be shared rather than baked by the various ethnic groups that constitute Nigerian State provides a fertile ground for the kleptomaniac elites who are obsessed with siphoning the public fund. In the end when two elephants fight the ground suffers but in this case the masses get leaner as the knots in the economic rope tied around their necks gets ever tighter digging ever deeper.

In general, the debauchery of politico-bureaucratic elite is a continuation of the debauchery of colonial rule. As a patrimonial state, there is poverty of identity as political elite use social identities such as ethnicity for their selfish interest. The ethnic identity becomes a mobilizing mechanism to access power, consolidate dominance and economic control (Osaghae, 1995). Consequently, like all patrimonial states, it is not impossible for power to be used for personal or group aggrandizements. Nigeria is seen by the political elite as their pre-bends to be used to secure the loyalty of clients in the general population. As a result of the patron-client relationship, Nigeria has regularly been one of the lowest ranked nations by Transparency International (TI) in its corruption perception index. According to TI in 2014 Nigeria occupied the position of 136 out of 175 countries. To President Goodluck Jonathan Nigeria is winning the war on corruption. But for many the Nigerians this is the worst administration. Under the watch of the President Jonathan no high ranking public officer brought to book. Instead weak judiciary and equally weak anti-corruption outfit were engulfed by the corruption.

Under this administration there is further institutionalization of corruption. In Nigeria's corruption is now institutionalized into the political system and where democracy has been replaced by "Nairaincracy" or "Dollaraincracy". A major shortcoming of this government is refusing to allow the country's anti-corruption agencies off the chain and allow them to prosecute those indicted by: the KPMG report, involving large-scale corruption in the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC); the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) audit report, which exposes 10 years of corruption in the upstream and downstream sectors of the oil and gas industry; 'pension funds corruption report'; 'corruption report' in the capital market, and of course the case of the missing \$20 billion from the account of the NNPC.

With all these incidences of corruption unprosecuted it is obvious government only paid lip service to war on corruption. Given this, there is the absence of genuine citizenship sentiment at the national level as Nigerians would first identify with their ethnic grouping before the

Nigerian state. The ethnic groupings protect their political patrons from stench of corruption. Hence the struggle and agitation for political representation by the various ethnic groups are meant to secure access to the common wealth (Ogundiya, 2009). This played out prominently during President Goodluck Jonathan's administration where the whole south south stood solidly behind him despite evidence of his ineptitude and corrupt practices. Therefore, the idea of federal character principle as embedded in the constitution, the idea of rotational or zoning arrangement besides ensuring sense of national belonging and promoting unity has embedded corrupt tendencies.

The lack of political will to put in place enduring structures of democracy, unemployment in Nigeria assumed a crisis level especially among school leavers and graduates in tertiary institutions. Graduate unemployment which hitherto was unnoticed, started to emerge in mid 1980s. Unemployment was further heightened by the increase of retrenched workers due not only to deindustrialization but in the main to neo liberal policy of marketization that came to fore as against society centric development strategy. Formal education that ensured the full development of human personality and citizenship was sacrificed as the inordinate quest to acquire wealth was the overriding consideration. Private schools proliferated while children of the upper class bourgeoned by seed of corruption went to school outside the shores of the country. Educational infrastructure decayed while staffs were underpaid. In the end, most of institutions became ghost of their past images and are labouratory of churning out half-baked graduates. The major reason for this is the poor policy formulation coupled with embarking on projects that do not have direct relevance to the poor. In fact, most of the so-called policies initiated had urban bias as rural dwellers; the large majority of the country was neglected.

Challenges of poverty to democracy in Nigeria should not be assessed based on maintaining set rules for managing power struggle among elite. But in the context of the great material deprivation of the masses of the people as democracy is an avenue by which their legitimate aspirations for a better future can be expressed and claims for redress made.

Democracy will not flourish in Nigeria until public institutions perform their most fundamental duties in a reasonably efficient and predictable manner. Corruption was a key in deciding the outcome of 2015 general election in Nigeria. In the election issue of President Goodluck Jonathan's lack of political will in limiting the intensification of corrupt practice was his Achilles heels. With the lack of political will whatever progress that has been made in State-building are eroded by the lack of sustainable governance. Resultantly, Nigerians are still overwhelming denied basic public goods of health care education, clean water, electricity power, physical security, sanitary environment and decent transport infrastructure because the institutions to provide them are constantly being eroded from within. Consequently, the chasm between the people's fundamental aspiration and profligate elite enormous institutional weakness increased. In the election the people saw the opportunity to put an end to despoliation of the livelihood assets of the people.

Economic growth is taking place concurrently with rent seeking activities. Consequently gains of GDP growth has not trickle down to the poor. GDP itself is a means to an end; the 'end' being the achievement of high well-being for all within environmental limits ('sustainable well-being'). GDP is a measure of the goods and services that result from all of the people, factories, and natural resources available to a country. GDP does not capture non-market goods and services like the benefits of cleaner air, more beautiful forests, cleaner drinking water, lower

global temperatures, fewer natural disasters etc. It's not meant to be a comprehensive measure of well-being, material or metaphysical, over time. It's merely a proxy for that: a measure of the goods and services sold in a country in a given year. Hence GDP is not an accurate measure of a country growth. GDP per capita is a poor measure of well-being. Therefore the much publicized GDP rebase in Nigeria is actually nothing more than incremental teaks at growth based on an erroneous index that does not translate to economic improvement for the people.

This false hope of GDP is the new justification for the creation of new super wealthy elite in Africa while millions remain in abject poverty. GDP is not an adequate measurement of social well being or broad based transformation. The problem is not the creation of wealth or the motivation to get rich; it is the structural failure of the development strategy to create a broad based economic growth. With weak institutions such growth can never really elevate the people. Rather has an exacerbated suffering of the people. The current policies favor the multinational corporations who are depleting oil sector's capacity as a broad based wealth generator.

Little attention is paid subsistence of the farming sector which is still at the bottom of the existing Poverty Pyramid. By failing to transform this sector out of subsistence to a vibrant commercial economy food security cannot be achieved, Without lifting this broad base of society, the new Nigerian version of "Trickle Down" would do not much more than transforming the peasants into landless "urban penny earners".

4. Conclusion

Poverty is a huge challenge to the democratic experience in Nigeria. Nigeria is a country blessed with abundant and natural human and natural resources. But due to the rent seeking proclivity of the elite they have squandered developmental opportunities and have become one of the poorest nations in the world. Corruption in Nigeria is a multifarious and multidimensional. It connotes the abuse of public roles or resources and is inextricably tied to politics. The struggle for 'national cake' is an unending battle between opposing forces. Corruption is at the core of the crisis of governance and legitimacy, the establishment of a stable democratic order, rule of law, development and the welfare of citizens.

Several measures and approaches to eradicate corruption have been employed. These include institutional approach, constitutional engineering or legal approach and the use of propaganda and political educational approach. Recent legal or constitutional approach include: ICPC, EFCC and Due Process office. All these agencies were designed to short circuit corruptions but despite these measures, corruption has persisted. The persistence of the problem is an indication that constitutional engineering, institutional approach and socio-economic reforms here proved to be inadequate panacea to the problem. The obvious reason is that corruption in Nigeria is both a strategy and an instrument not only of political domination but also of political manipulation. Corruption is a tool for the survival of politicians as it is used to acquire office and as well as sustain it. It would not be too farfetched to postulate that there is an overlap between politics and corruption in Nigeria in that they two flow into each other. In fact, to preserve their theoretical purity and independence is problematic as they are axiomatic in the sense that good governance begets a healthy citizenry whereas deficient democracy aggravates poverty. Therefore, the two, in the main are products of the same effort in that there is deadly embrace of politics and systemic corruption in Nigeria.

Economic hardship and crass poverty has rendered attempt to stem the tide of corruption in the country difficult. Corruption is both a symptom and consequence of poverty. Corruption

breeds poverty and poverty aid corruption to flourish. Thus, the citizens of the country are caught in the poverty trap where corruption is its own curse as the generality of the populace are enmeshed in it eroding the state from inside out; sickening the justice system and poisoning the police forces. In the end, if the people can not trust their government to do the job for which it exists, to protect them and to provide their common welfare, all else is lost.

The struggle against corruption is one of the greatest struggles of our time. Some countries especially from South-East Asia have shown that it is possible to build public institutions amid significant theft of natural resources-but none so far is Africa. China and India continue to grow at phenomenal rate despite relatively high level of corruption. Whereas in Nigeria, as in most African states, the proceeds of corruption are siphoned off into non-productive assets at home and abroad, what is left for domestic development are usually crumbs and crumbling institutions.

For Nigerian, “cohabitation without marriage” to transcend this fragile weak state of ‘muddling forward’ democracy where nothing is learnt from our past there must be an avid reconfiguration of our ethnic and religious binoculars. Our focus should transcend primordial parochialism and personal pursuits where anti-corruption policies are mere political facade designed to buy political supports and loyalty from the citizenry. As a healthy and well provided for citizenry are veritable adjunct of democracy.

Be all these uncertainties and disappointment about Nigeria democratic experience as they may, it is not too farfetched to state that poverty and its Nigerian adjunct corruption stymie economic growth. Or that democracy is in full retreat in the country as the gains of democratization are swallowed by corrupt. Contrariwise, Nigerian variant of ‘bunker’ and ‘muddling forward’ democracy is on course in that we are moving from one stage of inaction to the next level of prosecuting selected perpetrators of corruption.

While victory flags cannot yet be raised, neither should those of surrender be unfolded. The struggle to find a way out of this quagmire continues in a variety of forms as civil society becomes more involved, the independent media grow more diverse and inventive and communication technologies get more cheaper and wide spread and the masses of citizens take an ever more jaundiced views of attempt at political deception and manipulation. The lessons of 2015 presidential elections are here with us and are eloquent testimonies of the limit of human endurance.

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