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Corruption Control and Political Stability in Nigeria: Implication for Value Re-Orientation in Politics

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Abstract - There is a clear indication that politics in Nigeria has been the opposite of what it is in the developed countries. African politicians are still backward in terms of their values such as unfulfilled promises, political corruption, greed, violence, tribalism and intimidation. The premise of this study is on how corruption impacts on the development of Nigeria and Africa in general. Corruption is said to manifest through fraud, embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, inflation of contracts, sexual harassment, bribery and others. Corruption is also seen to be caused by misplaced sense of values, lack of accountability and transparency in government, greed, discrimination in wealth distribution and others. There is noticeable negative impact of corruption on the social, political and economic life of Nigerians resulting in political instability, erosion of cherished cultural values, economic distortion and underdevelopment. The paper proffers ways of controlling corruption to include, behaviuor modification, transparency in governance, political will and sustainability of democracy. The study is of the view that with diligent implementation of its recommendations Africans can enjoy dividends of democracy and develop.

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Corruption Control and Political Stability in Nigeria: Implication for Value Re-Orientation in Politics

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Abstract - There is a clear indication that politics in Nigeria has been the opposite of what it is in the developed countries. African politicians are still backward in terms of their values such as unfulfilled promises, political corruption, greed, violence, tribalism and intimidation. The premise of this study is on how corruption impacts on the development of Nigeria and Africa in general. Corruption is said to manifest through fraud, embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, inflation of contracts, sexual harassment, bribery and others. Corruption is also seen to be caused by misplaced sense of values, lack of accountability and transparency in government, greed, discrimination in wealth distribution and others. There is noticeable negative impact of corruption on the social, political and economic life of Nigerians resulting in political instability, erosion of cherished cultural values, economic distortion and underdevelopment. The paper proffers ways of controlling corruption to include, behaviuor modification, transparency in governance, political will and sustainability of democracy. The study is of the view that with diligent implementation of its recommendations Africans can enjoy dividends of democracy and develop.

I. Introduction

Every informed person will agree that among many factors affecting political stability of Nigeria as well as most African countries, corruption has been the control factor. The crave by leaders and public servants in Nigeria to amass wealth while in public service, has not only affected national development but also accentuated political instability. This is often manifested in youth restiveness, social insecurity, conflicts, social uprisings, civil wars and even coup de tats, to mention a few. Consequently, corruption has become one of the major social ills plaguing the stability of Nigeria and even most African states. This requires prompt and urgent attention in order to rescue Nigeria nay, Africa from imminent political collapse.

Various definitions have been given to the concept of corruption. The World Bank (1998) defines corruption as 'the use of public office for private gain. This definition includes bribery and extortion, which involves at least two parties, and other types of malfeasance public features do engage in to include fraud and embezzlement. Corruption has also been defined as an anti-social behaviuor conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms whish also undermines the authority to improve the living conditions of the people (Edame, 2001). Nye (1967) further defines corruption as, behaviuor which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private (gains) regarding personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or state gain; or a behaviuor which violates rules against the exercise of certain types of duties for private gains regarding influence. This definition includes such behaviours as bribery (use of reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism and misappropriation. Sorkaa (2002) view corruption as an unethical or deviant behaviuor. Corruption connotes an erosion of ethics and accountability. According to Rashead and Olowu (1993), ethics focus on what is considered the right and proper behaviuor of public officials, politicians as well as those in the private sector. The words 'right', 'proper' and 'fair' express judgment about behaviuor of people towards others considered to be just. This presupposes that there are 'right' and 'wrong' ways to behaviuor which constitute a society's standard. Corruption is a social virus which has besieged most African States. Its high incidence involves public servants (civil servants and politicians) on one hand and members of the public who are seeking public services on the other. Accountability on the other hand is synonymous with being answerable. This indicates that governments are accountable to the people particularly in democratic societies. It behooves therefore that absence of accountability creates a fertile ground for corruption and other unethical behaviuor to thrive.

II. Shades and Manifestations of Corruption

Achebe (1983), maintains that corruption in Nigeria spans from budgeting abuses, political patronage, public funds being doled out to political allies and personal friends; collection of mobilization fee or full payment without executing the contract, rewarding politicians who failed elections with ministerial appointment, re-assigning ministers, commissioners or council members who are involved in scandals to another ministry or department. Other forms of corruptions found among the African Politicians include,

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greed, selfishness, intimidation, oppression, violence, turgery, nepotism and tribalism.

III. Reasons Adduced for Corruption

Corruption involves acts of omission and commission ranging from trivial to monumental depending on the ethics and mores of a given society. These reasons are many and differ from one social super structure to the other. In Africa, some states have unique factors which are prone to corruption while all other social formations have some other factors which bring about corruption to include:

Discrimination in wealth distribution Africans have a common denominator or canker that causes decay in the fabric of unity among the states which could be described as uneven distribution of wealth to meet the basic needs of the masses. Many African States have failed to perform their role basically due to the inefficient mode of production and insensitivity to the needs of the down-trodden. Basic needs like, food, shelter, education, health care services, transport and communication are denied the people thus there is a widespread poverty, deprivation and underdevelopment.

Greed and materialism as a compulsive desire to acquire wealth at all cost and to be seen to have made it in an outrageous proportion is now the food of many politicians across Africa. The Nigerian politicians are not exception and do not have the morality or societal value of honesty, trustworthiness and faith-fulness. They do not see politics as what it is; rather they look at it as a means to create or amass immediate wealth and live in affluent leaving the masses in object poverty. Hence the Nigerian politicians go to any length to acquire power and always try to retain the power because of their selfish and egocentric desires.

Today, political corruption and bribery have combined to threaten our political atmosphere in Africa. It is crystal clear that Nigerian politics is swimming in the ocean of bribery and corruption. In fact, it came to the extent where only the highest bidder won election in Nigeria until President Goodluck Jonathan came up with the 'every man's vote must count' in the just concluded 2011 elections. This one man one vote count portents a good omen for Nigerian politics. Nepotism and tribalism are other twin brother values and social ills charact-eristics of African politics, many African politicians are not in any elective or appointed position for patriotic reasons rather they are there to sit tight and enrich themselves, their nuclear and extended families, loved ones and tribesmen. The sense of true patriotism and national integration is obviously lacking in the values of most of our politicians. The truth is that many African politicians are not committed to the concepts of a just and equitable Africa.

Nature of the state in Africa is another reason for corruption. According to Ake (1996) the colonial state of Africa had the legacy of being all powerful, absolute and arbitrary in nature. The violent character of colonial state placed it in a permanent situation of war against the people. Moreover, it is more concerned with its exploitative mission than anything else. Thus at the down of independence, the colonialists had to train and hand over power to agents who will continue to protect their colonialists interest. These state operators became profligate and went extra mile to enrich themselves. The realization that they needed economic power to retain political power made them even more profligate. Thus the people resent them, making their rule illegitimate. In order to legitimize their rule, besides the use of coercion, they had to use unethical means such as 'settlements' among other unpopular measures.

Influence of the larger society also breeds and encourages corruption in Africa. The society on one hand frowns at corruption and on the other hand encourages corruption by tacitly rewarding those who are known to be corrupt. For instance, in Nigeria, traditional rulers are known to bestow traditional titles to 'their deserving sons and daughters'. Universities award Honourary Doctorate degrees to rich Nigerians while special prayers and positions in churches are offered to such caliber of people irrespective of their source of wealth. Corrupt politicians are awarded with juicy government positions after being tried and imprisoned for various corrupt offences while in office. This explains why most fraudsters in Nigeria bear the prefix 'Chief' or 'Doctor' after their names. It is common place in Africa to see such old politicians remaining and clinging on to power in government for decades or even refusal to cede power when defeated by the opponent. This breeds political instability in the continent.

Ignorance and low level of educational attainment is another cause of corruption and political instability in Nigeria as well as entire Africa. Many people join politics to become rich fast and to have unchallenged power in the society. Many Nigerians are not aware of how politics should be played according to its ethics. An in-depth assessment of Nigerians form of politics has always been characterized by ugly situations. Many people who could have been major contributors to our social, economic, political, physical and religious development were killed while many houses and properties were burnt and destroyed by opponents. Many people not killed but maimed are still suffering from the effects of dirty politics in African nations. How do we account for or explain those politicians still suffering or witnessed mysterious deaths and assassinations for which the police cannot unravel, these happens to both highly and lowly placed politicians.

Lack of transparency and accountability in office has been a bane in many African countries. Transparency in public service cannot be achieved except every public act is done in an open manner; lack

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of it lead to avoidable speculations and loss of confidence in the instrument of power, and the process which has fanned the growth of corruption in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Lack of accountability and supervision has progressively bedeviled African states. As a result, some African elites have corrupted themselves and the public officers have forgotten that they are accountable to the electorates. In some instances, those in authority have abdicated their supervisory responsibilities and in the process laws and regulations have been breached without censure. Where this state of affairs has become prevalent, the public service has lent itself to abuse by dishonest politicians.

Corruption and political instability in Africa has been tactically influenced by the 'Big economic powers' like China, Russia, America and Europe who provide haven for stolen funds by African political leaders. The multinational corporations working in Africa assists Africans to loot resources and expropriates them. Construction and communication giants, oil companies, etc. assist through contract inflation and import invoicing. They fund corrupt and sit tight leaders and built mansions for them with ammunition and in turn loot resources easily thereby encouraging corruption in Africa. Nigeria has experienced about coups d'etat and countless rumoured, unsuccessful coups since independence in 1960. She has undergone virtually all forms of political instability. Oderinde (1999) enumerates political instability to include assassinations, guerilla warfare, succession movements, revolutions, civil war, major government crises, large scale anti-government riots, politically motivated strikes, major constitutional crises, abrupt and unusual constitutional changes, purges and plots. It is only the nascent of democracy that is trying to stop political instability in Nigeria.

IV. Noticeable Impacts of Corruption on Development in Africa

The issue of corruption in Africa has resulted in very devastating situations on developing African economies. Some of these debilitating effects resulting from corruption are as follows:

Corruption has affected political development negatively. Political parties and electoral process in most African States have been plagued with corrupt practices and electoral irregularities such as violence, stuffing of ballot boxes, thuggery, intimidation and elimination of recalcitrant opposition candidates (Edoh 2003), rigging, bribing of electoral officials, security men and party agents in order to have a free hand to change results at polling boots or else where. Other practices include denying voting cards to supporters of opposition parties, gerrymandering of constituencies so as to create an uneven playing ground for the oppositions as well as deliberate omissions of names from the voters' register, making of fictitious returns where elections did not take place, under age as well as multiple voting among others.

The utter inability of African ruling elites to play electoral politics according to the rules of the game and corruption free has partly been responsible for military intervention in African politics as it used to be in Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, among others. This has often resulted in political instability, crises, uneasiness, killing of political opponents and general loss of lives and properties; increased cost in conduction of elections, vandalization, thuggery, arson and intimidation. These evils, no doubt do not create a healthy atmosphere for development. Since the main aim of political power seekers in Africa is to enrich their pockets with public funds, political and electoral corruption culminates into misuse and embezzlement of public resources. This is why Edo (2003) affirms that:

> *Power seekers in Nigeria see politics as an avenue for making money, a sort of open cheque to wealth, to be in power and to control state resources which are often converted to personal uses correspondingly, to lose elections is to be out of power and to be denied access to the opportunity for aggrandizement. To maintain incumbency, those in power use all sorts of strategies to ensure that the election results favour them (p.*82).

This confirms that point made earlier that African leaders are self-centered and seek power solely for self aggrandizement. Their corruptive behaviuor has not only seriously undermined democracy in Africa but has disempowered the Africans to the point that the very essence of democracy which is popular participation of the governed, and public accountability of the leaders is still far from being a reality. The African political elites regard the masses as 'unthinking bunch' whom they must decide for, manipulate and cajole. Africans are therefore living impoverish and miserable lives instead of leading a better life.

It is unfortunate that divided loyalty has characterized most politicians in African public services following the erosion of ethics, accountability and transparency. Dishonest public officers misuse their official position and regard them as source of income with which to service private public as well as means of fostering their selfish interest. This affirms what Ekeh in Langan and Cooksey (1995) describes as 'two publics'. In an attempt to address the conflict between private interest and public good in African administrations. Ekeh argues that there exists 'two publics' in African public administration. One is the private public and the other is the 'real public. The private public refers to personal interest, personal relations, kit and kin and immediate society the public officer belongs while real public refers to the public office he occupies in government. Ekeh, further contends that Africans who hold public offices see their positions as serving these two publics. Unfortunately however, most Africans in public offices

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tend to be more dedicated and committed to only the private public.

Serving the private public at the expense of the real public has contributed to the undermining of the development of African continent. This has manifested in tax evasions, poor road construction which calls for immediate repairs soon after their completion, examination malpractice and leakages. Public servants have tended to look for what will help keep their stomach full rather than their contribution towards the advancement of public welfare.

There is also the issue of conflicts and poor integration which breed nepotism and upset ethnic balance. It has exacerbated problems of national integration in African countries. For instance, ethnic and political insurgence in countries like Liberia, Burundi, Kenya, etc. may not be unconnected with corruption. Moreover, there is extreme dearth of moral and ethical values among Africans. These have eroded values like hardwork, integrity, dedication and commitment to work, faithfulness and honesty have been replaced by indolence, dishonesty as well as distrust between leaders and the led. This calls for prompt value re-orientation in Africa.

Economic distortion and underdevelopment is another indexes of corruption in Africa. Corruption impinges on the economic development of African countries including Nigeria resulting in decision being taken for selfish interests of the public office holders. In Nigeria, countless financial scandals in billions of naira involving past leaders like the late General Sani Abacha and James Ibori and resent managers of failed banks. These corrupt tendencies are by mature geared towards benefitting both the receiver and the giver. The receiver treats corrupt activities as sources of income which those who give benefit by evading the individual coffer. There are other forms of corrupt practices such as kickbacks which abound thus increasing the cost of governmental contracts. This creeps in to immobilize government management, increase the cost of administration, making it difficult for government to pay their workers promptly and reasonably as well as provide basic infrastructures and social services. The aspiration and objective of every government is to provide basic needs to life so as to improve the living standard of her people thus reducing the problem of poverty which Is not only widespread but also dehumanizing in Africa. Sorkaa (2002) attest that, corruption in recruitment leads to inefficiency and waste, dominating entire activities of government.

V. Re-Orientation for Corruption Control and Political Stability

Political instability has threatened national stability and cohesion in the entire continent of Africa. In Nigeria, despite the adoption of a number of mechanisms and strategies ranging from Education, Federalism, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Federal Character, Constitutionalism and the establishhment of Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB); no corresponding impact has been seen in its democracy. Lack of corruption control, information and value re-orientation led to little or no success in achieving political stability until very recently with the evolution of free, fair and credible elections through the instrumentality of Mr. President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan and Professor Atahiru Jega. Corruption has permeated every stratum of African society. It is common knowledge that corruption is affecting every facet of life and has become endemic to a frightening dimension to imagine what kind of value we will bequeath to future generation in Africa. This thought provides a springboard from which a full fledged and concerted approach towards corruption control should be launched. The challenges to be met are enormous and require a well set out plan and spirited efforts. Measures to control corruption include the following:

Political Will: To fight corruption effectively, Ayatse (2003 recommends that there must be total commitment from all sectors of the society in each African state. Success in the eradication or at least the control to a manageable level of corruption must of necessity spring from the political will of the leadership like that demonstrated by Goodluck Jonathan in his first few months on seat as the president of Nigeria. Unwavering political support and commitment will lend itself to the creation of an atmosphere conducive to dealing with the causes of corruption in order to combat the monster. The absence of political will, on the other hand, will definitely dissipate all efforts which may be invested in the fight. Whatever is done by the well meaning people in that direction will be undermined by lack of support and this is likely to fan the growth of more corruption?

Enhancement of sustainable democracy: By far, the most effective way of controlling corruption is by enthroning and sustaining democracy. Democracy is popularly referred to as government of the people, for the people and by the people. Democracy in its true sense is not a representative government, but the popular government in which the citizens have to participate directly in the exercise of sovereignty (Ake 2000). Democracy is not a more multi-party electoral competition; neither is it just for election as it has been reduced to. Democracy has come to be understood and practiced in Africa as mere right to vote and be voted for. Democracy ensures transformation of the society and its citizens through provision of and equitable distribution of goods and services such as food, electricity, portable water, education, etc. Sustainable democracy enhances good governance, transparency and accountability of political leaders, public servants and citizens. Ijewere (1999) alludes to certain

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characteristics of democracy and good governance, which Africans need to imbibe to include:

1) It must be democratic in the sense of free, fair and credible elections on a universal suffrage.
2) It must respect the rule of law; there must be constitutional checks and balances to prevent misuse of state power; there must be protection of individual respect for minorities.
3) The system must supply economic programme which is growth oriented, inclusive and broad-based.
4) All citizens must feel involved in the nation's life.

Effective use of the law: Law declares behaviours which are prohibited and attracts sanction. For the law to be effective, transgressors must be detected and punished promptly but where culprits escape detection and prosecution, the law loses its effectiveness. The institution established by law to fight corruption must possess the powers and the where withal to carry out its duties efficiently, impartially and without discrimination. The respective African governments must endeavour to give them the requisite moral and material support to make them tools of corruption control. The various African governments need to urgently design programmes of action to fight corruption. Muganda (1995) maintains that such programmes must be structured to include the strengthening, streamlining and modernizing of institutions of law enforcement. Some African states have put these structures in place such as the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC) in Nigeria and Mukono Integrity Declaration in Uganda. Here in Nigeria the programme is making some appreciable wave of success of stemming the tide of corruption. Its failure may be largely due to lack of institutional powers, competence, commitment and partiality on the part of the agency and interference in its activities by other arms of government.

Development of creative human resources: Sustainable democracy should create enabling environments for human resource development. Such development should aim at developing human creative potentialities. This is to create a proof of experts who will use their potentialities to create wealth through new knowledge, new methods and new products. This will integrate Africa into the global economy of the 21st century where Africans will no longer be consumers or dumping ground but creators of knowledge and wealth. It is such experts that will help solve African problems of health, illiteracy, poverty, etc which are complex and dynamic in nature.

Behaviour modification: Corruption as defined by Sorkaa (2000) is a deviant behaviour. In this direction therefore, lends itself to modification. This implies that corrupt civil servants can be helped through psychotherapy to modify their corrupt behaviour. Politicians should develop high moral conduct and the practical fear of God in the society and demonstrate through moderate life style the virtue of contentment and help cultivate the sense of hard work and discipline. African politicians are expected to develop a commitment to truth and values to facilitate personal growth and moral uprightness in the society.

Transparency, accountability and good governance: Transparency demands that government duties and business be done in an open manner. Sorkaa (2002) has it that accountability involves members of government being held answerable for their actions and administrative lapses. This implies that accountability is a sine-qua non to good governance. It also means that both subordinate and the super-ordinate are answerable to each other in carrying out assigned duties and in exercising discretionary powers. Good governance, on the other hand, is governance which is open, transparent and accountable in all its dealings. It also satisfies the needs and yearnings of the people. It is people oriented, its objectives being set and pursued by the people. Its operations are open to security by various institutions of good governance, anti corruption agencies or commissions such as:

1. Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC)
2. Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC)
3. Public accounts committees (in the legislature)
4. Public Complaints Commission
5. Code of Conduct Bureau
6. NDLEA and NAFDAC
7. Failed Banks Tribunals

These agencies have to be strengthened legally, financially and administratively to carry out their duties without interference from the executive, legislative and judicial arm of government. According to Ayatse (2003), apart from the above institution, there should be:

1. Better conditions of service for public officers (in terms of pay, incentives and facilities).
2. Sound policies on recruitment, training and public personal management
3. Professional associations (labour unions) in the public and private services should institutionalize professional values and ethics and deal with erring members
4. Creation of culture of service in the public interests based on leading by example in terms of accountability, etc.
5. Self discipline by all political leaders and public servants without external control.

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VI. Conclusion

Political stability could be established in Africa through good governance, fairness, honesty, justice, transparency, accountability and a careful nurture of democracy through good education. Corruption has been one of the most internal constraints to development in Nigeria. It has led to political instability in Nigeria and has affected economic growth of most African states. Corruption has resulted in erosion of cherished cultural values such as dignity of labour, fairness, honesty, faithfulness, integrity, etc. It has also affected the practice of democracy in Africa and hindered transparency and accountability, leading to bad governance.

Corruption must not be allowed to prevail if Nigeria and any other nation must develop. In view of this, political leaders, civil servants and the citizenry must have the political will to fight corruption. The masses should be educated on the evils of corruption and be mobilized to eliminate the social malaise. Political leadership in Africa must be seen to be doing government business in transparent and accountable manner. The subordinates being led should be in the know of what is going on. Their needs should be provided for through prudent management of public funds while the entire African states should be fully democratized. Above all, it is hoped that if this call for re-orientation of Nigerian politicians in respects of their values is answered in good fate, sanity and uprightness will be restored to our political scene. There will be positive change in the value system of politicians and Nigerian will enjoy fully the dividends of democracy.

VII. Recommendations

To sustain political stability and control corruption in the country consequently fostering development in African, the following recommendations are hereby suggested:

1) Political education should feature in the school curriculum and introduced as a course in social studies at the primary and secondary and in the general studies at the tertiary institutions;
2) Government should organize adult education classes where adult education will focus on democracy, accountability etc, and be taught along with other subjects;
3) A strong political will by all to fight corruption be evolved in all states;
4) There should be effective use of approved law without discrimination nor laxity;
5) Efforts be geared toward mobilization of African societies through creation of awareness of the evils of corruption and how to fight it and control it;
6) Transparency and accountability be enforced in government functions, particularly in financial transaction;
7) Anti-corruption agencies should be put in place and their effective and successful functioning enhanced;
8) The above recommendations could be further encouraged through constant radio and television talks, jingles and research work on corrupt free society, democracy and political stability.

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