

## **CORRUPTION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: AN ISLAMIC PANACEA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Corruption is a deep-rooted age-old phenomenon that exists in innumerable forms, knows no cultural boundaries, operates in the private as well as the public sector, applies to rich countries and poor, and defies a comprehensive definition. It is a hurdle for national development in the least developed countries (LDC), and emerging and development economies (EDE). Given this universality, the paper argues that corruption is an impediment to national development and has adverse impact on social fabric and economic growth, peace and stability in Nigeria. Marxist Theory is adopted to provide framework for this study. The contention of this paper is to look at Islamic perspectives in fighting corruption in Nigeria with a task to explaining what is understood by corruption conventionally and in Islamic perspective. To this end, the paper thus upholds that, there are many areas of crime control which can be borrowed from the Islamic legal, social and political system to save Nigeria from the menace of corruption and achieve meaningful national development. It is within this context that the paper prescribes that the ongoing campaign against corruption by the present administration in Nigeria can only gain momentum, if the whole society repent, change and amend its evil ways, it is then that our conditions can improve and be better.

**KEYWORDS:** Corruption, National Development, Marxist Theory, Shari'ah

### **INTRODUCTION**

Its causes have been measured empirically, as have its impacts on human development. Institutions and administrative procedures have been overhauled. Countries have negotiated and signed international anti-corruption conventions. Yet corruption clearly remains a challenge.

Corruption is one of the evil acts practiced by human beings out of selfish motives. It is not only creates negative impact on national development of the country but, indirectly, destroys the balance of the social order also (Adebanwi and Obadare, (2011). It involves injustice as well as display of might or administrative connections. The Holy Qur'an warns mankind of the consequence of injustice and violence, and states: "Do not do mischief on the land." Allah asks mankind: "Who is more criminal than those who do injustice?"(Suratul-Araf, V.56)

Corruption is not only pervasive, alarming and endemic in Nigeria but according to Achebe (1983),

it has entered the fatal state in the country. Corruption in Nigeria is a symptom of poorly functioning state and it is capable of retarding socio-political and economic development. Corruption constitutes a threat to democratic order, political stability and sustainable national development. The fundamental objective of this paper is to examine the menace and attempts plausible strategies from Islamic perspective towards eliminating or transforming this demented act in Nigeria.

## **CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING**

### **Corruption**

The concept of corruption has been defined in various societies mostly in line with the culture or prescribed social life of the people. While some societies speak of corruption mainly in terms of illegal acquisition of material things, others tend to stretch it further by bringing social and moral values under it (Cleen Foundation, 2010).

Corruption is a form of dishonest or unethical conduct by a person entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire personal benefit. Government, or 'political', corruption occurs when an office-holder or other governmental employee acts in an official capacity for personal gain. Maier (2000) writes that political corruption is the illegitimate use of public power to benefit a private interest. Dike (2008) defines corruption within economic context, as an action to (a) secretly provide (b) a good or a service to a third party.

Kaufmann (2000), from the World Bank, extends the concept of corruption to include 'legal corruption' in which power is abused within the confines of the law as those with power often have the ability to make laws for their protection. According to Clinard and Peter (2013), corruption in Africa is a problem of routine deviation from established standards and norms by public officials and parties with whom they interact. The dishonest and illegal behavior exhibited especially by people in authority for their personal gain is corruption.

By the provision of Section 2 of the ICPC Act, corruption includes vices like bribery, fraud, and other related offences. Corruption is the abuse or misuse of power or position of trust for personal or group benefit, monetary or otherwise. Corruption is a symptom of numerous difficulties within contemporary societies. It usually involves more than one party.

In philosophical, theological and moral discussions, the term corruption has been defined as spiritual or moral impurity or deviation from an ideal. In general sense, corruption is highly related to materialistic tendencies due to real needs caused by desire to live beyond one's means, which tends to manifest in the desire to become distinguished by all means among one's peers.

### **Islamic Perspective on Corruption**

Muslim jurists differ in defining corruption. In Islam, corruption literarily means Fasad which encompasses mischief, abuse, rottenness, decay, decomposition, putrefaction, depravity wickedness, viciousness, iniquity, dishonest and perverseness (Mutiulla, 2013). According to Islamic teaching, any action and deed of mankind that flout justice or rule of law at home, place of work, school premises, play ground etc are an act of corruption (Iqbal and Lewis, 2002).

Islam therefore, is a complete and comprehensive way of life; it is universal in its scope and in its applicability. Islam sets a standard of divinely guided social justice, moral value, ethical identity, political system and transparent economic norms. Islam propagates the above through education and knowledge under the two sources of Sharia, the Qur'an and the Hadith.

The Quran as the first source of Islamic law, is a revealed book of Allah, a book of knowledge and guidance, revealed to mankind to get educated, follow the path of Allah, through learning from its chapters and observing Allah's command. A Muslim society therefore succeeds only by gaining and using the knowledge for the proper cause and pleasure of the creator Allah the Almighty.

The Qur'an is a comprehensive book of guidance. It contains a complete book of universal standard; it is superior to any other faith, in that it guarantees happiness in man's life. It has an unshakable belief system with moral and practical laws with source firmly codified in the holy Qur'an. As Qur'an (chapter 25 verse 33) clarifies that:

“And no question they bring to you but we reveal to you the truth and the best of explanation (thereof)”

Based on the above, it is important to note that Islam is the only religion which identifies corruption as a moral and ethical problem of an individual. Islam also provides the ability to foster self-restraint through the knowledge of Quranic ethical framework for human behavior e.g. by applying justice, equity, honesty, fear of Allah, decency, moral value and accountability. This is because Islam has an ethical component often derived from the holy Qur'an as clearly indicated in chapter 11 verse 85 that:

“O my people, give full measures and full weight with equity and do not defraud the people of their things and do not commit iniquity in the earth, causing disorder”

The above Quranic verse shows that not only the remarkable role Islam demonstrates in denouncing the evils of corruption but also promotes morality and justice for the betterment of mankind, rule of law, environmental balance, peace and harmony in the society. Islam only focuses on promoting and enforcing a code of universal values which define the relationship that human happiness but also brings transformation with a clean and honest society. Quran (chapter 38 verse 28) states that:

“Shall we treat those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, the same as those who mischief an earth? Shall we treat those who guard against evil the same as those who turn aside from the right?”

Furthermore, Islam eradicates the corruption menace through justice which is the central value. Islamic social justice instills fear and equitable distribution of wealth through proper administration of zakat, provision of basic needs/necessities and protection of the weak from economic exploitation by the strong. Meanwhile, a number of things cause corruption in Nigeria, and among them are: greed, poor youth empowerment, poverty and unemployment.

### **National Development**

Like corruption, development is a value word. It is always normative because it is directed towards

the objectives that people desired. Biddle and Biddle (2012) in their own words defined development as: “social and personal change that moves towards consciously chosen goals. The chosen goals are done by the people who are in the process of change”. Rodney (1972) as quoted by Lackey and Rawlence, (2007) defines development as: at the level of individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, self discipline, responsibility and material well-being. Taking a cue from the above definitions, Mutiullah (2009) defines national development as the capacity of nation state to pull all its resources both human and material to achieve set objectives for the good of the state and the citizenry. National development therefore can be seen as the overall development or a collective socio-economic as well as political advancement of a country or nation. This requires total commitment on the part of the rulers and the ruled. Rulers are to create enabling environment for the citizens to actualize their dreams without any hindrance.

### **The Marxist Theory**

Marxist theory has continued to be a source of hypothesis to many theorists in the world, and which has created a “theorizing puzzle” in the realm of social reality. Marx propounded that every society, whatever its stage of historical development rest on economic foundation; the mode of production, this in turn has two elements, the forces of production and the social relations of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of the society. That at a certain stage of its development, the material forces of production in the society comes into conflict with the property relations. That this antagonism and conflict is inevitable between these two classes, and would result as class consciousness and militant class action develop in the overthrow of the existing system. Having rejected the idealist and functionalist approaches, the Marxist school of thought contends that rather than people’s consciousness determining their well-being, it is the way the society organizes the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services that determines their material conditions. Some of the proponents of this approach are Nwala (1980) and Nkom (1982).

The Marxist approach is of the view that corruption essentially is an elite affair while criticizing the idealistic approach as being too simplistic and illusory especially in its explanation of societal corruption. It also sees the functionalists as undermining the persistent class conflict and struggle that exist in virtually all capitalist societies (Metiboba, 2002). It is becoming more widespread in most enlightened circles today that corruption is a structural problem, which derives from and has its existence in the socio-economic organization of society.

Having treated the two key issues of this paper, attention would now be turned to how corruption affects development in Nigeria. On this score, the focal point would essentially be political and or leadership, bureaucratic, economic and judicial corruption as they manifest in various spheres of Nigerian society.

### **MANIFESTATION OF CORRUPTION ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Corruption is not only pervasive, alarming and endemic in Nigeria but according to Achebe (1983), it has entered the fatal state in the country. Corruption in Nigeria is a symptom of poorly functioning state and it is capable of retarding socio-political and economic development. Corruption constitutes a threat to democratic order, political stability and sustainable national development. Looking at the nihilistic effects and the threat posed by corruption to national

development in this democratic dispensation, this chapter sets out to examine the menace and attempts plausible strategies towards eliminating or transforming this demented act in Nigeria.

Crippling corruption encumbers both the state and the society at large. Nigeria has been oscillating between the second and sixth place in the transparency international index of corruption in the world. For the second time running the Berlin-based Transparency International (TI) has ranked Nigeria as the second most corrupt nation in the world in the 2002/2003 reports (Saliu and Aremu, 2004). In the 2004/2005 surveys, Nigeria has also been ranked as the sixth most corrupt country in the world. The little improvement in the nation's credentials in 2005 is as a result of the war against corruption of the Obasanjo's administration but after the expiration of Obasanjo's administration, corruption resurfaced with impunity (Mutiullah and Olaofe., 2013).

In this light, Nigeria seems to be an example of a failed state in combating corruption. From the common man in the street to the highest political figure, corruption is recurrent in almost every transaction in the Nigerian society. The nation has written its name on the annals of corruption to the extent that the name 'Nigeria' these days is synonymous to corruption or scam. It is disheartening to realize that Nigeria cannot achieve national development despite her enormous natural resources. The recent several cases of corruption saga; from budget padding to judges' bribe scandal shows how people trusted with high responsibility used their position to enrich themselves at the expense of the country. This is why national development would continue to elude the country.

Corruption leads to abandonment of projects that could have accelerated national development in all facets. Examples are; Ajeokuta and Aladja Steel project, Itakpe iron ore, the inland rolling mills and machine tools in Oshogbo; the paper mill in Akwalboku in Cross River State, Aluminum Flat Sheet also in Cross River State and so many abandoned projects of Federal, State and Local Governments. There is also re-cycling of projects, 10% kicks back syndrome at the three tiers of government.

Education, health and indeed the entire economic sector is at its lowest ebb because of corruption. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) reported that Nigerians have about \$189billion in overseas banks. This is the money stolen from Nigeria and stashed overseas. It is this money that is oiling the economy of Europe. If that money was invested in Nigeria, Nigeria could have been a better place. No foreign will steal his country's money and take it to Nigeria or any third world country and bank.

Any country with high corruption like Nigeria is likely to experience developmental bankruptcy. A situation where some Chief Executive Officers of various organizations- both private and public-indulge in corrupt practices to make their money means that economic development will suffer. When Nigerians keep on our commonwealth illegally to foreign countries, there will be less economic development in Nigeria. So many crises in Nigeria today are as a result of corruption. The insecurity in Nigeria brought about by Boko Haram insurgency is a consequence of corruption. The attacks by Boko Haram members have caused disorderliness in Nigeria and seriously affected the economy of the country. It has greatly repelled intending investors and by extension, affected the economic status of the country.

Many have questioned the determination of this nation in combating corruption which apparently

has good anti-corruption laws and institutions in place. The establishment of Code of Conduct Bureau, Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and EFCC to handle cases of financial crimes both in the public and private sectors respectively is a welcome development. However, the result so far achieved is insignificant when compared with the quantum of corruption that is being perpetrated in the three tiers of government parastatals and in the private sector respectively. General Murtala Mohammed recorded huge success in his fight against corruption. Ditto general Buhari, General Babangida institutionalized corruption in Nigeria. President Obasanjo on his part instead of fighting corruption and other social vices, used the anti-graft body (EFCC) under Ribadu to fight his political opponents. If not for the judiciary, Yar'Adua/Good luck would have recorded huge success in their fight against corruption and financial crimes in their first tenure. Corruption in the fourth republic has surpassed and or is the highest since Nigerian attained political independence. It is our fervent hope that the current anti-corruption crusade of the Buhari/Osinbajo administration will borrow a leaf from Islamic principles of combating corruption.

### **ISLAMIC PANACEA TO CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA**

Islam is the only perfect way of life. It enjoins the maintenance of a refined standard of character. It has solution to all human problems. It is the only hope for overcoming the present and future challenges of life. The future of Islam is the future of humanity. Islam commands righteousness and forbids wrong doings and evil deeds. In other words, it commands all noble moral and forbids all ill and despicable behavior. It is the complete guidance towards righteousness, and Government efforts in combating corruption.

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Islam is a complete way of life. Its teachings are full of truth, wisdom and virtues; and taken altogether, they are a perfect guide to mankind or society of all ages, generations, races, and social strata and full of solutions to any kind of challenges including corruption. Allah in Quran 6:38 says: "...Nothing have we omitted from the Book (Quran)..."

To tackle the problem of corruption adopting Islamic approach, it is pertinent to consider and explore the structures, tenets and teachings of an ideal Islamic society and its ways of life and how the structures, tenets and teachings can be adopted in fighting against corruption. The basic features of the structure of Islam are found in the Quran and traditions of the prophet (Sunnah). Three of the characteristics of an ideal Islamic society are revealed by Allah, namely: enjoining good, forbidding evils and having faith in Allah. The three characteristics if thoroughly and sincerely adopted will with no doubt, aid our fight against corruption.

### **Enjoining Good**

In a society where all the people or even majority of them do good, that society becomes earthly paradise as the rewards and results of good are nothing but good. Quran Chapter 55 Verse 60 says: "Is there any reward for good other than good?" Unfortunately, majority of the people in Nigeria do not do good. That is why we found ourselves in the situation we are in today. There is no doubt; all the corrupt practices that are being perpetrated in this country are nothing but evils; and the perpetrators are not morally upright. Islam identifies corruption as a moral and ethical problem of an individual. It also provides the ability to foster self – restrain through the knowledge of Quranic ethical framework for human behavior, e.g. by applying justice, equity, honesty, fear of Allah, decency, moral values and accountability. Therefore, if good is enjoined, corruption will be shunned.

### **Forbidding the evil**

This is clearly complimentary to the first characteristic. When people do good, definitely evil is shunned or forbidden. Therefore, the two characteristics go together. A person who does good and forbids evil will not embezzle funds or resources meant for the generality of the people or indulge in any other form of corruption. In other words, any society with application or implementation of these two characteristics will not be a corrupt society. The two characteristics are clearly lacking in our society; hence our present condition. Islam totally discourages all sinful and unlawful accumulation of wealth. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) enjoins Muslims to desist from illegal enrichment of themselves.

In Islam, corruption is regarded as human behavior due to moral and ethical problems. Islam therefore provides a moral framework for fighting corruption in our society. A Muslim faithful is enjoined to be above board about in his morals. Muslims should remain conscious of Allah, whether in private or in public, speak justly, whether angry or pleased, show moderation both when dealing with the poor or rich. Muslims should command what is right. It must be noted that doing good and having the right belief go hand in hand in Islam. The most fundamental characteristic of a Muslim is piety, humility and fear of Allah, the Creator. Islam teaches Muslims to be in control of their passion and desires. They should be morally healthy and must also contribute to the moral health of the society. Morally, Islam addresses every aspect of a Muslim's Life, from corruption, to walking on the street, from neighborliness to international relations, from leadership, to followership, etc. Islam therefore calls upon Muslims to behave in a just and ethical manner that is conducive to sustainable development by forbidding evil.

### **Having faith in Allah**

Having faith in Allah, the Creator, the destiny Maker and the Provider of all provisions is very paramount in every individual's life. Absence of faith in Allah could lead to corruption as we experience in Nigeria. If a public officer has faith in Allah and believes in Him as the ultimate Provider, he would not steal or squander public resources entrusted to him.

It is observable that in this society of ours, the fear of Allah is on zero level even in the midst of the clerics of both religions, who are expected to instill the fear of Allah into our hearts. The affection towards worldly and materialistic life has corrupted our hearts. Most people have become slaves of this perishing life to such an extent that they consider the rich and those who have gained this world and its splendor or luxuries to be the most successful, hence, the lust or temptation to steal and

squander public treasury whenever the opportunity comes up, or to indulge in any other form of corruption.

### **Generosity**

Generosity is one of the ethics of the Prophets, a pillar of faith and a ray of the light of firm faith. To be munificent and generous towards relatives, deserving ones and the like, for the pleasure of Allah.

### **Zakat**

It is beyond argument that we are not equally financially and materially endowed. Some are rich, while some are poor. To balance this natural inequality, Islam established the institution of Zakat and made it a very fundamental pillar of Islam and thus a major characteristic of Islamic society. The institution of Zakat is the cornerstone of the Islamic socio-economic system. It is emphasized by the Quran as a critical component of socio-economic justice. It works to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and establishes a safety net for needy members of the society. Both the sources and disbursement categories of Zakat are specified in Islam. One very positive economic effect of Zakat is that it increases the money supply and a consequent increase in the demand for goods and services. Zakat provides debt relief and enhances price stability. If accumulated in times of prosperity, Zakat funds can aid society through times of depression or recession as we are experiencing in Nigeria today. As observed earlier, the major causes of corruption are poor youth empowerment, poverty and unemployment, Zakat is the very institution in Islam to cater for these very negative situations.

### **Social Justice**

Islam eradicates the corruption menace through implementation of justice, which is the central value of a nation. Islamic social justice instills fear of Allah and equitable distribution of wealth through proper administration of Zakat, provision of basic needs/necessities and protection of the weak from economic exploitation by the strong. Proper application of this kind of justice will ensure eradication of corruption. Justice is the fountain of peace. Effective and efficient implementation of Islamic social justice will provide the framework for anti-corruption initiatives. This is because the Islamic political system and leadership position of power in the Muslim society are accountable not only to the people in the society but ultimately, to their Creator, Allah. Islam teaches that leaders are servants of their followers. Islamic justice system demands transparent and honest leadership, restraining from evil, illegal enrichment or any other form of corrupt practices.

### **CONCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Corruption is a worldwide phenomenon. As globalization becomes an interesting reality, internationally, corruption becomes our problem too, more than ever before. It is instructive to note that corruption cannot be eliminated while humans live, but can and must be effectively curbed and restrained if nations are going to prosper and reduce poverty. Corruption being the most formidable obstacle to national development in Nigeria, and which has permeated the polity, a total overhauling of the system would be carried out by progressive elements within the government in order to lay solid foundation for participatory democracy.

Islam provides a complete and comprehensive universal guidance and perfect solution to all human problems as clearly indicated in this paper. This being the case, it is therefore recommended that all the teachings of Islam as discussed above be imbibed by all and sundry so as to eradicate corruption



in our society. Corruption should not be limited to the issue of embezzlement and looting of public treasury alone but should be seen as all wrong doings as defined in Islam. Also, punitive measures like life imprisonment should be taken against any convicted corrupt officials so as to serve as deterrence to others. The current practice of allowing them to go scot free after returning the looted money should be discontinued. The Federal Government should make sure that all the corrupt officials are treated equal, there should not be any sacred cow.

Finally, the change mantra within the context of Change Begins with Me which was recently launched by President Muhammad Buhari is a right step in a right direction as it is in line with the Quran 13 Verse 11 where Allaah states thus: Verily, Allah will not change the condition of people until they change what is in themselves. Therefore all citizens should change their bad attitudes and ways of doing things in the past, if we want to achieve a corrupt free society. And this is time we must join hands together to kill corruption before corruption kill us.

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