

Review paper

Reengineering Nigeria for sustainable development: An appraisal of Muhammadu Buhari corruption fight in repositioning Nigeria for development 2015-2019

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ABSTRACT: This work is an appraisal of Muhammadu Buhari's regime's effort in repositioning Nigeria for sustainable development through the fight against corruption from 2015-2019. The government believes that corruption in Nigeria is pervasive and is the main cause of Nigeria's underdevelopment, hence the need to tackle it headlong. To achieve this, the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and others were extensively used as a tool to achieve this feat. The work discovered that sustainable development via this approach lacks the required attention because of weak institutions a condition that facilitates corruption. Based on this, the work stressed strengthening of the institutions especially the ones involved in fighting corruption and an extensive Information Communication Technology-based administration. The latter is

necessary for the short run and it should be restricted to all the finance and core departments of the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies of government. In the long run, full-grown E-governance can be introduced. E-governance is emphasized because it is efficient and capable of closing most loop-holes for corruption. Also, the work recommends quality education with bias in moral and Information Communication Technology. The basis for extensive investment in education is because wars are won and lost in the mind; corruption is a function of mindset. With proper education, quality leadership is assured. It is the lack of this that replicates itself in the form of corruption.

Keywords: Reengineering, sustainable development, corruption

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between corruption and development is inverse an increase in corruption impact negatively on national development. For example, corrupt use of the public fund for personal use represents a minus in the available resources at government disposal to provide social amenities. This reason informs why corruption issues have remained core issues in Nigeria's development drive, thus has featured in seminars, high-powered committees, and academic meetings. In Nigeria, past governments have promised to tackle corruption headlong. Emphasizing this, Mundt and Aborinshade (2004) succinctly put it thus "each political regime who comes to power promised to eliminate the practice and punish offenders fall into the same problem". In this

instance, Buhari/Idiagbon government introduced War against Indiscipline and Corruption. Obasanjo, Yar' Adua, and Jonathan's government used the Economic And Financial Crime Commission(EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, (ICPC), just to mention a few. These exclude due process in Public Service. Buhari government, desperate to achieve development, strengthened EFCC, ICPC; Nigeria Police, Code of Conduct Bureau, Directorate of State Security Service in this regard. These are demonstrations that the regime is averse to corruption and that corruption is a visible virus/monster that must be tamed if their development must be achieved. Currently, arrests of past government

officials have been made by EFCC, trials are ongoing for suspects. Based on the above background, this paper attempts to appraise Buhari's fight against corruption to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria from 2015 - 2019.

Conceptualizing corruption

Conceptualizing corruption is a daunting and challenging task. According to N-ue (2013), there are a plethora of definitions of corruption. This is because corruption is pervasive and as such, has received extensive attention. This stand informs why Victor (2012) opined that corruption is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon with multiple causes and effects, as it takes on various forms and functions in different contexts. According to Ruzindana (1999) in Oyinola (2011) corruption in Africa is a problem of routine deviation from established standards and norms by public officials and parties with whom they interact. Corruption from this perspective is not only dishonest behavior but also illegal behavior that is exhibited more by people who are in authority with the primary intent to achieving their gain. In sum, corruption is behavior that deviates from the formal duties of a public officer's role. The overall intent is to gain an advantage regarding a personal, class, family, private colleague, or status gains.

In this sense, corruption is antisocial behavior and it tends to confer improper benefits/gains contrary to legal and moral norms/principles which undermine the authorities to improve the living conditions of the people. In this sense, corruption is the "manipulation of coercive potentials of one's social position to gain personal or group advantage against some other person or persons. What is discernable from the scholarly works cited is that corruption is misdeeds; an immoral behavior perpetrated by persons who are in privileged positions. The ultimate intent is to give an advantage contrary to the law to either favor oneself or one's group members. In Nigeria, it is endemic and pervasive, permeating all sectors, class, ethnic group, religion etc. In this understanding, corruption exists in wall to wall manner, blanketing and smoldering every aspect of the country's socio-economic life ([www.antigraft.org/pages/ definition](http://www.antigraft.org/pages/definition)).

The problem

The effect of corruption on development is diverse and always impacts negatively on all components of development: social, economic, and political. Lipset, Lenz, and Seymour (2000) reveal that corruption among other issues reduces the volume of investment. Emphasizing this, Ekong (2016) claims that corruption impacts negatively on development. In Nigeria, the success recorded in the introduction of Treasury Single Account (TSA) and Bank Verification Number (BVN) is a demonstration of this. Through the use of BVN for

example, the federal government has discovered 23,000 ghost workers. In Bayelsa State, this method discovered 765 illegal teachers in the State Universal Basic Education Board. 50 of these are dead and the cost is estimated at 100 million monthly (Vanguard Newspapers June 2016).

Similarly, TSA's success story is in a trillion. These public funds in the hands of few persons mean that there will be fewer funds for building good roads, hospitals, schools, or research institutions, rescuing local businessmen when in crisis. Quoting Lima Declaration, Victor (2012) observed that the impacts of corruption among other issues include erosion of the moral fabric of the society, violation of social and economic rights of the poor and the vulnerable, undermining of democracy, subversion of rule of law, retardation of development among others.

This is easy to understand as one of the potent causes of corruption is weak state institutions and retardation of economic growth due to lower investment. The resultant effect of this is replicated in poor infrastructure and public service. This is apparent as public contracts can be procured through corrupt methods. Beyond these, limitation of aids flows, loss of funds, and negative composition of government expenditure also constitute part of the effects. Besides these, corruption can result in poverty or a high level of inequality. In all these, corruption constitutes a threat to good governance, rule of law, peace, and security of development programs that are aimed at tackling poverty and social crisis that is occasioned by it. Stressing this, Accountability Magazine (2009) succinctly claims that corruption is pervasive and that it has almost destroyed all aspects of our Nigerian life whether social, intellectual development, educational system, creative, value system, interpersonal relationship, and external image either in the individual level or as a nation. For these reasons, it is observed, constitutes the primary cause of underdevelopment in Nigeria hence the current government is desperate in tackling corruption headlong. For this reason, the government has strengthened the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB); Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT); EFCC; and has introduced Presidential Advisory Committee on Corruption, TSA, BVN, and Workers Biometric Data exercise. Evidence of these is over-whelming. EFCC for example has secured a lot of arrests and has recovered billions of funds within one year period. Most of the suspects are high profile: some former Ministers, Governors, friends, and relatives of the past President of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. Their involvement in the fraud is in billions of dollars and Naira. Some of these people have more than two counts of charges against them. For Buhari's government, this is a remarkable success towards the drive to fix Nigeria's development challenge.

This scenario is a permanent feature in Nigeria. Today, EFCC as the core institution in this fight has brought to light the \$15 billion arms and \$115 million 2015 election bribery scandals within the year in view. The TSA has led

to the closure of not less than 10,000 multiple bank account operated by Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) from where funds are assumed to have been siphoned, thus most revenue leakages are closed. This perhaps informed why Transparency International 2014 corruption perception index ranked Nigeria 136 out of 176 corrupt countries. From this index Global Financial integrity estimates that more than \$157 billion was looted in the past 10 years by corrupt government officials. This amount excludes returned funds by some suspects who do not want their matter taken to court. According to Nigeria Interim Report on Financial and Assets recoveries (2016), Lai Muhammed, Nigeria's Minister of Information, said that the Federal government has made cash recovery of ₦78,325, 631.82 (seventy-eight billion, three hundred and fifty-four thousand, six hundred and thirty-one Naira and eight two kobo). Other details include \$185,119, 584.61 (one hundred and eighty-five million, one hundred and nineteen thousand and five hundred and eighty-four Dollars, sixty-one pence); 3,508,355.46 pounds sterling (Three million, five hundred and eighty thousand, three hundred and fifty-five pounds and forty-six pence); ₦11,250 Euros (Eleven thousand, two hundred and fifty Euros).

This success was recorded from 29/5/2015 to 5/2/2016. In this respect total recovery under interim forfeiture cash and assets is ₦126,563,481.43 (one hundred and twenty-six billion, five hundred and sixty-three million, four hundred and eighty-one Naira) forty-three kobo); \$9,090,243,920.15 (Nine billion, ninety million, two hundred and twenty Dollars, fifteen cents); 2,484,447.55 pounds (Two million, four hundred and eighty-four thousand, four hundred and forty-seven pounds, five pence); and 303,399.17 Euros (Three hundred and three thousand, three hundred and ninety-nine Euros, seventeen cents).

From the report funds waiting return from foreign jurisdictions is \$321,316,726.1 (three hundred and twenty-one million, three hundred and sixteen thousand, seven hundred and twenty-six Euros, one pound); 11,826.11 Euros (Eleven thousand; eight hundred and twenty-six Euros, eleven pounds). There are also noncash recoveries which include form lands, plots of lands, uncompleted buildings, vehicles, and maritime vessels. From the scenario above corruption is one core obstacle to development in Nigeria, hence Buhari's administration's resolve to dust files to recover looted funds as a condition for the take-off of development. From the above, it is equally clear that in Nigeria, corruption is pervasive and that the cause of Nigeria underdevelopment is not necessarily scarcity of natural resources, but corrupt minds.

The concept of sustainable development

Development means collective/concerted or joint efforts of a people to overcome obstacles which can be either

Man made obstacles or natural obstacles. The very essence of development is to raise the standard of living of the people. The development represents a state of positive change; what Ekong (2016) calls total improvement of the condition of life of a people. In this respect, sustainable development means a positive change that is futuristic. It implies the type of change that enables the users of Nigerian environmental resources (or collective wealth) today without jeopardizing the interest of future generations to have access to use the same resources for their development or to achieve a higher standard of living. It is a type of development that maintains economic advancement and progress for today's generation and at the same time protecting the longtime value of the resources. So long as economic suitability is the concern, therefore economy and environmental development should be pursuit. Derived from this, is the fact that sustainable development is concerned with intergenerational equity in the use of resources to achieve progress. From the foregoing, the key principle of sustainable development is integrative use of resources and an enduring system that will checkmate behavioral abuse around the use of resources today in such a manner that such use can accommodate future generation's use of the same resources. In this respect, sustainable development is deeply concerned with providing enabling institutional framework/organization in ministries and departments in such a manner that their sectoral roles can run with negligible leakage or no leakage at all if possible. Where fragmentation exists, in the process, such obstacles will easily be identified. Such a level of the institutional building becomes the platform for efficient delivery of development products: public goods. This explains why sustainable development is perceived as long-term/continuous development of the society aimed at the satisfaction of the society's needs at present and in the future via rational use of and replenishment of natural resources, preserving the earth for future generations (Rio Declaration Environment and Development, 1992). It is simply a manifest share of the planet's resources; inclusive in this is an enduring system of dictating corruption. The system here involves institutional arrangements and strategies as a springboard for development. Such institutional framework and collaboration help to maintain the close social relationships between and among all the sectors.

Appraisal

Indeed the war against corruption in repositioning Nigeria for development from the government point is yielding fruits within the time frame of this study. Never in the history of Nigeria was that such a volume of looted funds returned. TSA and BVN technology substantially closed most financial leakages. The fear of EFCC and other

agencies fighting corruption has kept many on their toes. The success recorded so far is largely the efforts of EFCC. EFCC alone cannot bring about sustainable development in this light. What is apparent in the immediate is strengthening of the systems of all the institutions established by law to fight corruption, thereafter this can be extended to all the MDAs as administrative tradition. This is what is lacking in the current re-engineering of Nigeria for sustainable development.

In this option, E-governance is invaluable as it can bridge complex procedures to a simplified one, at the same time, achieve efficiency, transparency in the delivery of public goods. According to John (2013), E-governance can eliminate avenues of siphoning public funds and crowd pay vouchers with ghost names. It helps in better management of a large volume of data as there will be better connectivity between and among the MDAs. This way, significant errors that create room for fraud will be reduced. That is, automation of governance provides a platform that will significantly reduce bureaucratic red-tapes that breed corruption at the same time maintains transparency and accountability. The more transparent a government is, the more corruption is reduced and the availability of information about the functioning of government made open. Through this, it becomes easier to monitor the performances of government officials. Cost of governance will be scaled down as ICT in governance among other things, will reduce snail speed and long queues in public service; conditions that provide the impetus for corrupt activities.

The absence of use of ICT encouraged the breakdown of due processes which often come with the greasing of the palm of officers in charge. The application of this can be seen in the use of the Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) in the banking industry. With it, charges and other payments in the bank are made available within minutes or hours. Similarly, before now withdrawals in the banks are made only in the branch office where the account is domicile. Today, withdrawals and deposits are made anywhere and as a result, crowds have disappeared.

Secondly, strengthening the system to sustain the fight against corruption for development should involve the employment of quality-man-power, equipment and provide funding of these institutions. In this circumstance, it will be easy for the police or any anti-corruption agency to conclude an investigation before arrests. It is the lack of this that creates legal and corruption loop-holes. Where this is done, corruption cases will be dispensed with less energy/time by the judge. This way, congestion of matters in the courts will disappear. Equally important here is the employment of more judges to handle as many cases that arise within a short period. By this, it requires that the system must be properly funded especially the judiciary, police, and other anti-corruption agencies. Through proper funding which requires freedom of the institutions to access fund and investigate

whoever they need to investigate will be easier for them to locate stolen funds and the processes involved. This way, judgments can be gotten within a reasonable time frame. In this sense, it is expedient for EFCC, ICPC just like the Nigeria Police to have offices in all the local government areas.

In this scenario, training is fundamental for all the MDAs because it provides the basis for the corruption track. Just like training, the education industry should be strengthened further to produce manpower that can fight corruption. In this regard, strengthening should take in the form of curriculum expansion to emphasize moral and ICT knowledge in all levels of education. This way, future generations will be prepared to take the quality leadership role. The beauty of education is that wars are better won in the mind (as corruption is about the mindset). With proper moral education and sound ICT education, the war against corruption for development will not only bring about development in the immediate but a generational one. Again, education helps to produce quality leadership.

Conclusion

Corruption is a manifestation of systematic failure, thus it is pervasive in Nigeria's case. The relationship between corruption and development is inversely related yet the objective of the government is to bring about development. Corruption's pervasive nature and its relationship with development explain why virtually all governments in Nigeria including the current one do identify it as one visible virus that needs to be tracked if development objectives must be achieved. President Buhari's efforts have remained remarkable, most stolen funds have been returned due to efforts of EFCC and other institutions in fighting corruption. But for this success to be sustained, it is necessary to strengthen the MDAs which are still very weak. In the short run, the culture of strict compliance to Due Process that is ICT-based in all the institutions involved in corruption-fighting should be sustained. While this will track corruption practices in the immediate, the government can extend this to all MDA's and their departments later. Of importance here is the need for true democracy where a free and fair electoral process prevails. This way, a people-driven leadership will emerge. Such leadership will leave above the sentiments that promote corrupt practices. To achieve this, all democratic institutions should be ICT-based; electronic voting devices like Card reader should be made to work effectively. Finally, investment in education particularly moral education should be given top priority. With great emphasis on moral education, leadership training, and ICT-based administration, corruption will be thoroughly reduced; sufficient funds will be made available for sustainable development. Corruption is simply a moral issue, it

originates from the mindset. Like corruption, education re-directs the mind to be averse to immoral acts as real victory starts from the mind. Through moral education, whatever development culture that has been recorded in the short run will be sustained for the future generations.

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