ABSTRACT

Nigeria is blessed with abundance human and natural resources but despite its huge array of resources, the economy has remained stagnant. The paper examined the impact of corruption and social conflict on national development in Nigeria. Corruption and social conflicts are perceived as fundamental factors to national development in Nigeria since independence in 1960 and that colossal sum of fund has been lost to corruption and social conflicts such that could have been ploughed to national development. The paper was a descriptive study that relied on secondary data sources. In order to bring about sustainable development and stability in the country this paper recommended that policies which induce or provide opportunity for corruption should be addressed broadly from the moral, parental, cultural, ethnical, political, judicial, physiological and economic perspective. Politics of exclusion should be avoided to minimize disaffection that could generate social conflict while government must be proactive in facing developmental challenges.

KEYWORDS: Corruption, Social Conflicts, Underdevelopment, Political Elites and

1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption and conflicts are global phenomenon, the peculiarities might not manifest in the same manner across the nations and it is largely a function of the efficiency of institution established to deal with the issues. Though Nigeria is one of the leading African countries in terms of development but the spate of corrupt practices and protracted sectarian conflict is perceived to have negative implication on economic development. It is a statement of fact that Nigeria is one of the leading oil producing nations globally according to Africanvault (2016), so it also has the capacity to be one of the first 10 largest producer of Liquidified Natural Gas and 10th in terms oil reserves based on Eurasia Review, (2016) while there is hardly any mineral resource that could not be found in Nigeria but the nation is one of the poorest globally, hence the nation is crawling for survival. This explains why Nwaobi (2003) asserts that Nigeria is a land of contradiction as it is rich but the masses are poor as also noted by Omotola (2008). The implication therefore is the lack of inclusive arrangement in the allocation of resources that has the tendency to breed disgruntlement that could occasion violence and in effect affect economic development.

The Fourth Republic that commenced in 1999 has been the longest experience of democratic rule since independence. There is the assumption that corruption is growing geometrically while measure to curb it is growing in a snail speed. There is also no doubting the fact that this era witnesses drastic steps directed at checkmating corruption in the history of Nigeria apart from 1983-85 period under General Muhammad Buhari, but the effect of all the measures could largely been seen as not too successful. In addition, the era partly witness that of economic boom based on increase in the price crude
oil up to 2014 but such gains didn’t feed into economic growth and development. It equally coincided with the period of terrorism and religious extremism that could not but distract the attention of government from paying real attention to growing the economy and also perceived to have encouraged the growth of war economy. Soludo (2015) therefore argued since 2011 the price of crude oil was around $100 per barrel and recorded a period of higher sales but the nation was faced with declining foreign reserves and depreciating exchange rate. This could not encourage the growth of poverty and increasing rate of unemployment.

Extant literature shows that there cannot be meaningful development where there is no peace and the situation could be worse when social conflicts are coupled with ingrained corruption. Albert (2005) and Irobi (2005) noted that have turned to be theatres of violence, low human capital development index and extreme poverty. Nigeria is one of the countries in the low HDI category, and there is clear evidence that as corruption becomes more pervasive, deadly conflict has intensified both of number of conflict-related deaths and the geographical spread. There is barely any political zone in Nigeria that has not experienced some form of political violence and armed conflict since the fourth republic in 1999. Many development plans have been crated in Nigeria on regular basis but the challenges of growth and development is so deep rooted in Nigeria’s history and can easily be referred to as catastrophic even since the 1960s while the challenges are becoming complex and intractable with time. This seems the only country where virtually all notions and models of development have been experimented (Aremu, 2003). The processes of state-building in Nigeria since have been most difficult because of corruption and social conflicts. The national diversities are manipulated and politicized in the continuous struggle over national wealth by the corrupt elite. Boko Haram insurgence in the north-east of the country and previous ethno-religious conflicts in Kano, Jos and Kaduna had devastating effects on the economic activities in those cities. The Lebanese community in Kano for instance moved out of the city and this worsened the employment situation in the country. According to Alao et al (2015) the effect of terrorism and sectarian conflicts the implications of multi-dimensional conflicts in Nigeria as well as the fall out of Boko Haram insurgence have left behind an inestimable damage to every facet of life in Nigeria. There is no gain saying that it has slowed down the national economic growth and development since no investor would prefer to invest in a crisis ridden nation.

Abdullahi (2011) therefore argued that corruption and conflict represent two most chronic challenges of human development across most of the developing world. What is very troubling about these problems is that they appear to occur together or in some form of co-relation which informed the paper to examine the relationship between corruptions, social conflicts and developed in the fourth republic in Nigeria. The paper was descriptive and relied on secondary data sources such as relevant text books, journal and Internet source.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

2.1. Social conflict

Social conflict is often seen as struggle for power, resources or other substances considered to be of importance to all the parties and are not mutually acquired. It manifest as opposition to a stance adopted by a party against the other. It stems from social interaction while conflict might not occur when there is no interaction and becomes pronounced when there is stiff opposition by one party against the other without the willingness to compromise. This explains why Donohue and Kolt (1992) view conflict as: “A situation in which independent people express (manifest or latent) differences in satisfying their individual needs and interests and they experience interference from each other in accomplishing these goals”

Conflict is essentially a fact of life, which occurs where the interactions of people are marked with differences in aims, perceptions, approaches, views, and values as we have it in multi-ethnic Nigeria state. The above definition can be explained that it occurs where there is mutual dependence on one another, this means before conflict occurs there must be a form of connection probably through their views or aspirations. In addition, it can be hidden or open, where it is hidden, it becomes difficult to manage and can be very dangerous in term of causality when it becomes manifest. Also, that conflict cannot occur without the clash of needs and interests. The clash of interest is however potent in conflict generation and that it emerges when there is interference with the interest and aspirations of other parties.

It is essential to note the conflict emerges if resources, positions and power are perceived not to be inclusively or judiciously allocated between individual, groups or enclaves within the social system. It becomes explosive when the mechanism to seek redress is either not in existence, weak or perverted. Though social conflict when it becomes protracted and violent might be destructive but it possesses seeds of social change and transformation when productively handled...
The implication therefore is that areas with abundance of resources if the proceed not productively or judiciously allocated might be exposed to the danger of violence due to social conflict. This explains why Oviasuyi et al (2010) argued that the Niger Delta Region has been exposed to series of violence on account of resource control today and has led to economic sabotage and restiveness among the youth in the region.

Alao (2012) observed that there has been an increase in ethnic consciousness and consequently violent conflicts in Nigeria since 1999 to date. IPCR (2017) cited in Strategic Conflict Assessment of Nigeria (SCA) (2016), described the social conflicts situation in Nigeria in the fourth republic thus:

That occurrences of conflicts in the six geo-political zones of Nigeria have known no territorial or geo-political bounds; variously, from insurgency and militancy as well as a variety of other cross-cutting, forms of inter-group and communal conflicts, including conflicts borne out of youth restiveness, sundry crime against humanity, political conflicts, ethno-religious and inter-faith, intra-faith conflicts, conflicts across the North-Central, North-East, North-West, South-East, and South-West, to occurrences of pure, oil-based insurgency, militancy, and inter-identity or sub-identity conflicts in the South-South, including the virtually ubiquitous, and often violent conflict between herders and farmers – as further manifested across the country.

In North-Central, the problems include; land scarcity, conflicts between herders and farmers have remained dominant across all the States in the region. The insurgency in the North-East has affected all socioeconomic activities in the region. This has created an atmosphere of fear, despair and material lack for the displaced and those still in the three most affected States of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. The South-East geo-political zone experiences conflicts between and within communities mostly triggered by disputes over land, boundaries and traditional leadership succession wrinkles. The South-East also suffers separatist agitations and inter-group conflicts. In the South-South we have the oil-induced conflicts, inter- and intra-group conflicts, land disputes, gangsterism and cultism as well as leadership succession disputes are also common in the region. There are clashes between the farmers and herders in the South-West geo-political zone accompanied by communal clashes, labour disputes and general criminality. The North-West geo-political zone has its own tapestry of conflicts; indigene-settler conflicts; inter-faith tensions between Muslims and Christians; and intra-faith tension between mainstream Islam and the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN). Intra-faith conflicts also persist amongst Islamic sects in states in the zone. The South-South geopolitical zone, besides being the hotbed of oil-induced militancy in Nigeria, is also afflicted by inter- and intra-group conflict. Chieftaincy tussles, land disputes, gangsterism and cultism, political and economic conflicts are equally common in the zone. (Pp 15-17).

Many measures have been adopted by previous administration in Nigeria as way of checkmating social conflicts. These included the introduction of Federal Character policy, National Orientation Agency, Inter-Religious committees, creation of Local Government and States as well as the 2014 National Conference with little or no significant records of achievement partly because of the prevalence of conflict merchants, war economy and lack of strong political will by the government top confront the issues of conflict. This by implication makes conflicts the most effective way of inviting government attention to issues of conflict while the lack of prosecuting agents of conflict to logical conclusion could not deter others from embarking on violence. This explains why there have been many avoidable but disastrous violence social conflicts in Nigeria without respite.

2.2. Corruption

Corruption is a universal problem very pervasive and with severe implication based on the degree to which the institutional mechanisms to curb it is effective in various nations. Corruption is not limited to converting public goods into personal property but even the perversion of established system to achieve selfish ends translates to corruption. Though Huntington (1989) approached discussion on corruption from public sector perspective the International Monetary Fund (IMF) views it as “abuse of authority or trust for private benefit; and is a temptation indulged in not only by public officials but also by those in positions of trust or authority in private enterprises or non-profit organizations” (IMF, 2000). The definition by the IMF goes beyond public space, it aligns with ICPC Act section 2 and World Bank (2000) to accommodate any form of wrong doing that led to compromise of the trust imposes on any establishment connotes corruption.

According to Osoba, (1996), corruption is viewed as an anti-social behavior that might be perpetrated by an individual or group that has the tendency to confer on them an unjust benefit which is clearly inconsistent with the established order
of the society or nation with the tendency to subvert the power or capacity of the established authority to perform to its full capacity. The position of Koffi Anna is that corruption is an insidious plague with massive corrosive effects on societies with the tendency to undermine democracy pervert the rule of law, causing violations of human rights, distorts resource allocation and permits criminal element to perpetuate the nefarious activities Annan (2003). Fijnaut and Huberts (2002) study shows that conglomerate of social, economic, political, organizational and individual causal factors are important to explain cases of public corruption (p 8). What is consistent in all discussions about corruption however, is that corruption is wrong; it is always a deviation from right moral conduct.

Corruption in Nigeria has become endemic and Caiden (1981:9) distinguishing between corruption as a fact of life or a way of life. Corruption at best could be described as a way of life as it is rampant, systemic, and is the norm rather than the exception. However, corruption is a fact of life connotes that corrupt offences are the exception rather than the rule.

2.3. Development

Development is a booze word that is capable of many meanings which might be viewed from many dimensions such as economic, technological, social, educational political, and cultural perspectives. According to Seers (1969) development could be viewed based on reduction in poverty, unemployment and inequality. Todaro (1977) also perceives it as multi-dimensional process which involves transformation in “structures, attitudes and institutions and combined with acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty”. This explains why it is often associated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but increase in GDP without corresponding improvement in the life of citizens could not be regarded as real development.

This might have led Hodder (2000) to view development “as an economic, social or political process which results in a cumulative rise in the perceived standard of living for an increasing proportion of a population”. Nnoli, (1980:163) therefore notes that development has to do with total improvement in the lives of the citizenry which is connected with social welfare, equity and justice. In effect, the study argues that in a situation of massive corruption and protracted social conflict, development could not be achieved.

3. CORRUPTION AND CONFLICT: DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

The relationship between corruption and conflict is interwoven, in that it is perceived that corruption can be a causative factor for conflict or conflict promoting corruption. In a badly divided nation like Nigeria, lack of inclusive arrangement in allocation of values combine with perversion of justice which could best be seen as corrupt practices. The lack of effective and equitable mechanism to redress wrong cannot but promote disconnection between the ruled and the ruler. This might indeed promote aggressive behavior by the citizenry to right societal wrong since the government best understands the language of violent.

On the other hand, the prevalence of war economy in a situation of conflict has the tendency to promote corruption. Naidoo (2000:1) views war economy to denote the mechanism for sustaining a protracted conflict on account of using the nation’s resources by the parties to conflict. Nicola,(2005:4) perceives war economy as the type of economic activities that grows in wartime. The implication therefore is that such economy associated with war time has the tendency to perpetuate corruption and in turn sustains the war and ensures that it defiles easy solution.


Corruption is one of the greatest evils of our time and a key driver of conflict. It perpetuates conflict and prevents the resolution of conflicts. It poses real threat to national security, unity and survival of the African States and people. Corruption engenders conflicts which have forced millions of our people into unstable life as refugees. Many of the causes of conflict are rooted in corruption. These are social, political and economic inequality among others. The high level of unemployment, economic decline and lack of education are other factors fostered by corruption. Given the scenario, one hardly succeeds in conflict resolution without tackling the vices of corruption, because there is a relation between the two
Corruption breeds a culture of survival for the fittest, hence the battle for the control of the resources. Such unstable socio-economic situation give birth to the mushrooming of conflicts.

In Nigeria, social conflicts, especially ethnic conflict, is unavoidable in circumstances of inter-ethnic competition where the fear of domination breeds antagonistic and undesirable socio-economic struggles with its attendant anti-social effects. According to Dibie (2004) in equalitarian pluralism is the chief feature of the Nigerian society… where one group exerts maximum political and economic powers, which enables it to shape the nature of the military, as well as inter-ethnic relations in a way to sustain its interest. (p.30). Corruption as usual, in any country, began in Nigeria gradually to challenge the national norms and the rule of law and it is now an endemic phenomenon, the personal and ethnic interest coupled with dubious ethnic heroism now competes with national interest. And because this had been left to go on for long, it is currently dominating the national interest such that the country is being weakened by various conflicts. This was confirmed by Vallings (2005) the state will then exhibit signs of fragility, with violent conflict as one of the possible symptoms. In Nigeria, currently, corruption has deepened income inequality, often along ethnic lines. This leaves those ethnic groups that gained power at independence with the control over resources at the expense of poor and marginalized groups (Mbaku, 2007).

From the above it can be seen that social conflicts and corruption accounted largely for Nigeria’s underdevelopment. For instance, Gani (2006:77) observed that the prevalence of corruption has occasioned high level of unemployment, poor education, lack of water, electricity, housing, good health and sound infrastructure. This could have led Amaefule and Owete (20000:32) quoting the former Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nuhu Ribadu, in a public lecture to observe to note that Nigerian leader destroyed the nation through high-tech corruption and massive stealing of money meant for developing the nation. He also noted that sum of money stolen was in excess of what was required for rebuilding Europe after the second world war through the Marshal plan.

The manifestation of corruption and its effect on conflict and development could also be found in the misappropriation of fund meant for security in the fourth republic. Emmanuel Ogbe in an interview with Abah (2015) observed that “Jonathan spent $4 Million fighting ‘Bring-Back-Our-Girls’ campaign while the girls were still at large even up till now. In the report by The Guardian (2015) based on Federal Government Investigation reports on Arms Deal observed that:

513 contracts awarded at $8,356,525,184.32; N2, 189,265,724,404.55 and €54,000,00, fifty-three (53) were failed contracts amounting to $2,378,939,066.27 and N13, 729,342,329.87 respectively. The report further noted that payments to the tune of N3, 850,000,000.00 (Three Billion, Eight Hundred and Fifty Million Naira) were made to a single company without documented evidence of contractual agreements or fulfillment of tax obligations to the Federal Government of Nigeria. (See Thewillnigeria.com, Nov 17, 2015 and African News Service, Dec. 21, 2015).

The implication of these shady deals was that the resources ordinarily meant to fight the terrorist ended up in private pockets thereby exposing the citizenry to insecurity, poverty and hunger and complicating developmental challenges. Hence, this could explain misallocation of resources meant for developmental purposes to fight the terrorist and quench sectarian conflict. Hence, Aina (2016) observed factionalism borne out of greed by rampaging economic vampires propels three main crises in governance in Africa namely, disunity, insecurity, and corruption which best described present crises in Nigeria and significantly contributed to low level of development.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper concluded that corruption can serve as a catalyst factor for social conflict as long as there is no justice and inclusion in allocation of values which will deepen inequality and has the tendency to causes underdevelopment because of misallocation of scarce resources. There war against corruption is largely a war against corruption and underdevelopment.

The paper therefore recommended:

1. The government should develop a strong and sincere politithatcal will in its war against corruption through the establishment of a sustainable institution for confront the hydra-headed monster.

2. Social conflict has its root within the society; therefore an inclusive approach should be adopted to confront the issue of conflict rather than pacification of the aggrieved parties.
3. The developmental approach should assume bottom-up approach as to carry every active individual along by creation the enabling opportunity for growth and development.

4. The government must be strict that agents of corruption and conflict don’t escape punishment to serve as deterrence for others.

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