

# Corruption and the Challenges of Insecurity in Nigeria: Political Economy Implications

Angela Ajodo-Adebanjoko<sup>1</sup> and Nkemakolam Okorie<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Federal University, Lafia

*Received: 12 December 2013 Accepted: 5 January 2014 Published: 15 January 2014*

## Abstract

Nigeria is a country with potentials for greatness; a large population comprising of a dynamic workforce, a growing economy, natural resources, raw materials and oil deposits which make her the largest exporter of crude oil in Africa. Despite these indices for greatness, fifty-four years after independence, Nigeria is yet to find her feet among the comity of nations as insurgency continues to take its toll on the country and make life insecure for the ordinary Nigerian citizen. Corruption is a major cause of conflicts and insecurity which continue to pose a challenge to development in the country. This paper examines the issue of corruption and insecurity in Nigeria and the challenge this poses to the development of the country. The paper shows that corruption is a major cause of insecurity in the country and it is therefore suggested that the Nigerian Government should find lasting solutions to the crises while giving top priority to eradication of corruption in its transformation agenda.

**Index terms**— corruption, conflict, insecurity, prebendalism, political economy.

## 1 Introduction

Nigeria is the second largest country in Africa in terms of area and the most populous nation in Africa with a population estimated at 160 million people. It is often said that one out of five black men is a Nigerian. Nigeria is Africa's treasure in view of her brotherly role to other African countries in times of conflicts and even peace times. With its crude oil for exports which generate revenue for her dynamic role in Africa and the world, Nigeria is major contributor to regional and international organizations such as the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the United Nations Organization (UNO) to mention a few. Nigeria is also Africa's voice in the UN with her recent re-election as non-permanent member Security Council of the world body. In addition, efforts are on ground to make her one of the permanent members of the Security Council. Nigeria boasts of notable people like the Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, Chimamanda Adichie, Chinua Achebe, amazons like Finance Minister and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala one of the most powerful women and intelligent minds in the world, Joy Ogwu, Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the UN, and Former Director of National Agency For Author ??: Department of Political Science Federal University, Lafia. e-mails: Angelaigo@yahoo.com, okorienkemakolam@yahoo.Com Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and Minister of Information, late Dora Akunyili and a host of others. Despite this, the country is becoming one of the most dreaded places on earth with insurgency assuming centre stage. No day passes in Nigeria without the news of one form of bombing or the other. Kidnapping has also become the order of the day with the recent Chibok kidnapping of over 200 school girls in Borno State followed by subsequent kidnapping of other women including children and young men. These spates of abductions are currently generating global attention. Nigeria has become almost a pariah state as a result of insecurity. In addition to the problem of insecurity, Nigeria ranks as one of the most corrupt countries in the world and behind every ill in the society is corruption. With independence four decades ago, it was believed that the country would be ushered into the promised land of milk and honey but this has become a

mirage and mere wishful thinking. Rather, the country has been experiencing a plethora of conflicts ranging from secessions, civil wars, regional conflicts, and internal crises (ethnic, religious etc) which continue to affect the country's development (Ikejiaku 2009). Internal crises such as rampages, riots, and violent demonstrations are a common feature of the polity. These conflicts have destabilized the country and their costs in terms of loss of human life and property, and the destruction of social infrastructure are enormous. As a result of conflicts, many people have been forced to flee their homes and have become refugees in their own country and in neighboring countries. This paper is an examination of the twin problem of corruption and insecurity in Nigeria. The paper begins with an introduction and clarifies the concepts of corruption and insecurity while providing a theoretical basis for the study. It also establishes the relationship between corruption and insecurity followed by an in-depth discussion of their implications on the Nigerian political economy. The last section is the conclusion and thereafter recommendations were made.

## 2 II.

### 3 Conceptual Clarification

The concepts to be clarified are corruption and insecurity a) Corruption Corruption is the use of public office for private gain. It refers to any behavior that deviates from the norm or is socially unacceptable. There are different types of corruption each with its own characteristics. Some types of corruption include grand corruption, political corruption, economic corruption, religious corruption, moral corruption, professional corruption, organized corruption and working class corruption. Corruption may also take the form of cronyism, bribery, favouritism, patronage, extortion, influence peddling, fraud and embezzlement. The causes of corruption in Nigeria include; greed, the social environment, ostentatious living, societal and family pressure, getrich-quick syndrome, poor reward system, inadequate motivation and clumsy handling of corruption cases among others. The magnitude of corruption in Nigeria is alarming and disheartening. Corruption permeates every sector of the Nigerian economy and is found among the educated as well as the uneducated, among the rich and as well as the poor.

Corruption remains a major cause of insecurity in Nigeria if acknowledge that the factors that give rise to insecurity are the product of corruption.

### 4 b) Insecurity

Insecurity is a state of being subject to danger or threat. Most scholarly articles on insecurity in the Cold-War era focused on the traditional approach to security which is state-centric. In this regard, insecurity can be conceived as threats to the state which often accounted for the race for arms and nuclear weapons to defend the state (Ajodo-Adebajoko and Ugwuoke 2014). In the post-Cold War era however, human security or a people centred view of security has assumed centre-state. This is based on the fact that threats to human life emanate not only from situation of violent conflicts but other non-conflict sources (Saliu, Luqman and Abdullahi 2007). In this regard, insecurity refers to a situation of fear or anything that causes fear, harm or has the capability to cause fear or harm to an individual. Such issues could be politico-strategic, socio-economic, or ecological in nature; for instance political instability, poverty, environmental degradation, lack of access to education, discrimination on the basis of gender, diseases and unemployment.

### 5 c) Theoretical Framework

A combination of Prebendal theory and Frustration-Aggression theory would help our understanding of the issue of conflict and insecurity.

### 6 d) Prebendal Theory

Prebendalism refers to primitive acquisition. The concept is credited to Joseph Richard who depicts the politics of corruption in Nigeria where cronies or members of an ethnic group are compensated when an individual from the group comes into power or where; "state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by office holders who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups (Joseph 1996). This patronclient or identity politics has encouraged corruption in the country to the extent that appointments, promotions, admissions, award of contracts among others are done with consideration for one's ethnic or religious affiliations.

### 7 e) Frustration-Aggression Theory

The theory stipulates that aggression is the result of frustration which results from an individual's inability to attain their goals. Accordingly, insecurity is the product of aggressive behaviour which results from issues such as poverty and unemployment among others. Applying this to the study, corruption in the country has resulted in abject poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, injustice, absence of infrastructure, ethnic conflicts, militancy which in turn have resulted in insecurity.

---

### 8 III. The Corruption-Insecurity Nexus

Fifty-four years after independence, insecurity continues to pose a challenge to Nigeria. At the root of this is corruption. Corruption remains one of the greatest challenges to security in the country. The connection between corruption and insecurity is not far-fetched. Corruption fans the embers of poverty, crimes and by extension insecurity. For instance, armed robbery, cultism, terrorism, disease, unemployment and other factors which lead to insecurity are directly or indirectly related to corruption (Dike 2005). The advent of militancy, kidnapping and terrorism in Nigeria can be traced to corruption. In the Niger Delta region where militancy first occurred, it was championed by political thugs who were initially recruited by corrupt politicians prior to elections in the region. These thugs who became idle after the elections had no other job but found one in the form of militancy which eventually metamorphosed into bombing of oil installations and kidnapping of foreign oil workers for ransom. Despite amnesty granted to the militants leading to the sheathing of sword, kidnapping for ransom or rituals spread across the country and till date many find it a 'lucrative' business. The same is also true of the North-East of the country where the Boko Haram sect continues to make life insecure for citizens. Like their predecessors, Niger Delta militants, many of the sect members were once political thugs.

Political corruption is one of the major causes of poverty. Despite its oil wealth and abundant resources, owing to corruption, Nigeria remains one of the poorest countries in the world with many Nigerians living below the poverty line. According to a recent World Bank report (2005), Nigeria is one of the poorest countries in the world. This poverty status of the country results from the fact that selfish individuals divert funds needed for development into their pockets while the masses are left in abject poverty. Such funds no doubt could have been used to better the lot of the citizenry. It is on record that more than \$400 billion was stolen from the treasury by Nigeria's leaders between 1960 and 1999 while the country's GDP per capita fell from US \$1,010.00 in the early 1980s to US \$300.00 in 1999 (Okaduwa 2007). When people are frustrated because their needs are unmet they may resort to conflict as a way of expressing their frustration. This is in line with the saying that a hungry man is an angry man. In the Niger Delta region cited earlier on, embezzlement of funds by past officials of the state such as former Governors and local government Chairmen have robbed their respective states and local government areas of the needed funds for development purpose. In addition, the middlemen men between the community and the Multinational Oil Companies diverted the compensation meant for the various communities to their private use while the people were left aggrieved as a result of environmental degradation and poverty. This twin factor contributed to militancy in the area. The poverty level and educational backwardness in the North East Zone of the country is also said to be one of the contributory factors to the conflicts in the area.

In the case of unemployment, when people are not engaged in meaningful work and are lacking the basic necessities of life, they bring attention to their plight by engaging in destructive behaviour at the slightest provocation. There is a common saying that 'an idle mind (hand) is the devil's workshop'. Nigeria is made up of jobless youths who are ready to do anything, even engage in criminal activities as a way of engaging themselves if nobody does. These Jobless youths resort to armed robbery, electoral violence, assassinations, kidnapping, and rituals as a way of making a living. This is why according to political activist Odumakin (2012) "with 60 million unemployed youths, Nigeria'll have no peace." While we are not oblivious of the fact that there are other reasons why people engage in criminal activities, we cannot rule out the fact that activities resulting from unemployment are indirect consequences of corruption. Corruption leads to unemployment, unemployment to conflicts and conflicts to insecurity. Many Nigerian youths have become preys to terrorists and are easily radicalized. In the Niger Delta region for instance, unemployed youths were the ones employed in the armed conflicts between Multinational Oil Companies and militants while many of such youths are members of the Boko Haram sect.

Furthermore, criminal and corrupt elements in the country use their ill-gotten wealth to sponsor acts inimical to the security of the country. For instance, corrupt politicians use state money or money they have embezzled to sponsor political thugs in different parts of the country.

IV.

### 9 The costs of Corruption and Insecurity on the Nigerian Political Economy

The cost of corruption in Nigeria is huge and spans every sector of the economy.

Economically, Corruption and insecurity encourage capital flight as many foreign investors are reluctant to invest in Nigeria for fear of losing their money to swindlers and fraudsters. This is because many have been victims of swindlers popularly known as '419ers'. On the other hand, insecurity continues to take its toll on the economy. In many parts of the country, property worth billions of naira has been destroyed and many businesses have come to a standstill. In addition, many foreign investors have been discouraged from doing business with the country while many have returned to their various countries.

The cost of corruption is also seen in the fact that fifty-three years after independence Nigeria has not been able to celebrate one day of uninterrupted power supply and is still battling with access to potable water.

Politically, corruption undermines democracy, good governance and rule of law. It flouts or even subverts formal processes, undermines the legitimacy of government and such democratic values as trust and tolerance. This lack of legitimacy in turn creates enabling environment for insecurity to thrive (Okaduwa 2007). The situation in Nigeria has become such that most people no longer have confidence in the government but now seek for self-

protection rather than depend on the government apparatus. Recently over 480 soldiers were said to have defected to Cameroun while running away from the Boko Haram sect. During the same period, over 28 police officers at a Police Academy at Gwoza were abducted by the sect and in one of the interviews granted a few days later, one Assistant Inspector General of police announced publicly that the sect was able to overpower the police because the former had more sophisticated weapons in addition to be more in number. The question is, where did the billions allocated for military hardware go to? It is a known fact that many corrupt officials profit from the ongoing terrorist acts in the country. Such people make the polity ungovernable. They not only embezzle funds earmarked to fight terrorism but sometimes use such funds to oppress the people by sponsoring these terrorists. In the same vein, funds allocated for infrastructural development have been embezzled and diverted into private accounts. It is a shame that in this twenty-first century we can still find pupils in many parts of Nigeria sitting on bare floors because there are no furniture or classrooms where they can learn. While many government officials send their children to foreign countries to study they leave the poor at the mercy of teachers who embark on strike regularly to protest the poor state of the educational sector. Also, many people have died and continue to die from lack of medical care for factors that could easily have been dealt with. The high rate of deaths resulting from unnecessary surgeries and fake drugs are attributed to corruption. Victims are mostly the poor as the wealthy has access to medical treatment abroad. Furthermore, many roads in the country are not motorable and accidents are a common feature of our roads. Even travelling by air is sometimes not safe as aircrafts that should have been grounded are often bought and used in Nigeria. In addition, while millions are suffering and cannot boast of three square meals a day, individuals including government officials now own private jets. Corruption therefore continues to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

Socially, corruption and insecurity have done more damage to the country's image globally than any other phenomenon. Nigeria is currently reputed as one of the most corrupt and insecure countries in the world. As a result, the country has lost credibility as its image has been battered before the international community.

V.

## 10 Conclusion

Corruption in Nigeria can be traced to the politics of the colonial era where the Native Authority system encouraged the native police to collect bribes and pervert justice. Even after independence corruption continued and was entrenched during the various military regimes in Nigeria particularly during the regimes of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha when the public treasury was looted and the gains were used for personal aggrandizement. Up till this moment, there is hardly any administration in the country that has not been found guilty of the act of corruption. Corruption has made Nigeria a sleeping giant and has done more damage to the country than anything else we can think of, if we consider that it is directly or indirectly at the root of every evil. Corruption encourages kleptocracy, breeds poverty, unemployment and contributes to as well as exacerbates conflicts. Insecurity in the country results from conflicts and non-conflict sources. Corruption and insecurity are therefore twin problems of development in Nigeria. While corruption is the result of various factors ranging from political, social to economic, insecurity is mainly the offshoot of corruption.

The effects of corruption and insecurity on Nigeria's socio-political and economic development are myriad. Corruption and insecurity therefore pose a serious development challenge to the nation as they threaten to the existence of Nigeria as a nation.

Since corruption gives rise to insecurity, there is need to first eliminate corruption. If this is done, insecurity would be dealt a lethal blow. In this regard, the following are recommended:

Improvement in the standard of living of the people is necessary if the fight is to be won. This involves provision of jobs and socio-economic transformation.

Assets declaration by civil servants as required by the code of Conduct Bureau must be adhered to by every civil servant as a way of checking illegal acquisition of property.

The society should shun individuals with illgotten wealth or whose sources of income are questionable while the government, traditional/religious leaders should not give recognition or titles to such individuals.

Good governance, transparency, accountability and the rule of law are necessary if the fight against corruption and by extension insecurity is to be achieved.

Law enforcement agents should be equipped adequately to deal with the problem of terrorism.

There must be zero tolerance for corruption by the government and corrupt individuals who use their illgotten wealth to sponsor acts of terrorism should be prosecuted accordingly if found guilty.

Corruption and insecurity need to be eliminated for Nigeria to be able to effectively play its role as the giant of Africa and a force to be reckoned with globally. Eradicating corruption and insecurity from Nigeria is a task that should not be left to the government alone; all hands must therefore be on deck if the country is to be purged of this twin evil. <sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Corruption and the Challenges of Insecurity in Nigeria: Political Economy Implications

- [Goel ()] , S L Goel . *Personnel Administration and Management* 1993. Sterling Publishers Print Ltd.
- [Gibbons et al. (1976)] 'A Critical Analysis of Corruption and its Problems in Nigeria'. K M Gibbons , D C Rowat , A Goldsmith . Anth- 07-1-007-018-2007-018-2005-097-Akindele. *Africa Notes* Akindele S. T (ed.) 1976. May. 2000. 2005. McClelland and Steward. p. . (Risk, rule, and reason: Leadership in Africa)
- [AkindeleS (2005)] *A Critical Analysis of Corruption and its Problems in Nigeria*, available at [www.krepublishers.com](http://www.krepublishers.com), AkindeleS . 2005. Anth-07-1-007-018-2007-018-2005-097. Akindele.
- [Duba ()] *Anatomy of Corruption: The Hindustan Times*, P N Duba . 1977. New Delhi.
- [Odumakin ()] 'Combatting Corruption in the Public Sector and the Role of the ICPC in: Owolabi E. A (2007) Corruption and Financial Crimes in Nigeria, Genesis, Trend and Consequences'. J Odumakin . [www.cenbank.org/OUT/.../2007/TRANSPARENCY.2007.PDF](http://www.cenbank.org/OUT/.../2007/TRANSPARENCY.2007.PDF) *Woman of the Sun* on October 16, 2012. 2012. 2007. p. .
- [Ayobami ()] *Corruption Eradication in Nigeria: An Appraisal*, O Ayobami . <http://un/lib.un.edu/LPP/> 2011.
- [Dauda ()] *Corruption in Nigeria and Its Impact on the National Economy, being a paper presented at the National Workshop on Performance, Transparency, Accountability and Development at the Local Government Level for Local Government Key Functionaries in Abuja*, S Dauda . 2012.
- [Dike ()] 'Corruption in Nigeria: A New Paradigm for Effective Control'. V E Dike . <http://www.jsdafrica.com/Jsda/Summer1999/articlespdf/ARC%20%20A%20Psychological%20Analysis%20of%20Corruption%20in%20Nigeria.pdf> *Africa Economic Analysis* 2005.
- [Ajodo-Adebanjoko (2012)] *Corruption Without End: The Consequences of Lack of Institutional Punishment in Nigeria, Paper Presented at the 12 th Annual Conference of the Nigeria Sociological Society held at the Boardroom of the Faculty of Social Sciences University of Lagos*, A Ajodo-Adebanjoko . 2012. November, 2012. p. .
- [Lipset and Lenz ()] 'Corruption, Culture, and Market'. S Lipset , G Lenz . *Culture Matters*, Lawrence Harrison, Samuel P Huntington (ed.) (New York) 2000. Basic Books.
- [JosephA ()] *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: the Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*, JosephA . 1996. Cambridge: University Press.
- [Aku and Ujoh ()] 'Democratic Upheavals in Cote D'Ivoire and Nigeria's Interference: An Analysis'. D Aku , F Ujoh . *International Journal of Modern Political Economy* 2011. 2 (2) .
- [Benjamin ()] 'Determinants and Effects of Corruption on Investment, General Price Level and Sustainable Economic Growth in Nigeria'. A Benjamin . [availableatwww.theacbr.com/vol5n02fall2007folorunsho.pdf](http://availableatwww.theacbr.com/vol5n02fall2007folorunsho.pdf) *African Economic and Business Review* 1109-5609. 2007. 2007. 5 (2) .
- [Abiodun ()] *Effects of Corruption and Economic Reforms on Economic Growth and Development Lessons from Nigeria, Being a paper prepared and submitted For African Economic Conference*, E O Abiodun . 2007.
- [Ikejiaku (2009)] B-V Ikejiaku . *The Relationship between Poverty, Conflict and Development Journal of Sustainable Development*, 2009. March, 2009.
- [Ajodo-Adebanjoko ()] *Impacts of Corruption on the Nigerian Economy*, A Ajodo-Adebanjoko . 2012. Lafia. Department of Political Science, Federal University
- [Harriman (2006)] 'Is there a Future for Democracy in Nigeria? Text of a public lecture delivered at the Department of International development'. T Harriman . [availableatwww.theacbr.com/voln02fall2007folorunsho.pdf](http://availableatwww.theacbr.com/voln02fall2007folorunsho.pdf) *African Economic and Business Review* Benjamin A. F (ed.) 1109-5609. 2006. Monday 5th June. 2007. 2007. 5 (2) . Oxford University (Determinants and Effects of Corruption on Investment, General Price Level and Sustainable Economic Growth in Nigeria)
- [Edikan and Akpan ()] 'Nigerian government, the public sector and the fight against corruption: The role of information and communication technology'. N E Edikan , E E Akpan . <http://www.academicjournals.org/INGOJ> *International NGO Journal* 2008. 3 (10) p. .
- [Okonkwo ()] 'of 2) available at [www.vanguardngr.com/.../corruptionhas-long-history-in-nig](http://www.vanguardngr.com/.../corruptionhas-long-history-in-nig)'. R Okonkwo . *Corruption in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective*, 2007. 1947-2002. 1.
- [Akpuru-Aja (ed.) ()] *Peace and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria: A Reader*, A Akpuru-Aja . Ikejiani-Clark M. (ed.) 2009. 2009. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited. p. 12. (Basic Concepts of Conflict)
- [Aloysius-Michael ()] 'Peace and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria: A Reader'. O Aloysius-Michael . *Conflict Analysis in Ikejiani-Clark M*, (Ibadan) 2009. 2009. Spectrum Books Limited. p. .
- [Ajodo-Adebanjoko ()] 'Poverty and Challenges of Insecurity to Development'. Ogwuoke Ajodo-Adebanjoko . *European Scientific Journal* 2014.

- [Chaturvedi ()] *Printing and Publishing Academic's Dictionary of Political Science, Nigeria: EPP Books Services*  
*Nigeria LTD Corruption in Nigeria, Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, A Chaturvedi . Available at*  
[wikipedia.org/wiki/corruption\\_in\\_Nigeria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/corruption_in_Nigeria) 2006.
- [Kaur ()] 'Public Administration in Theory and Practice'. P , Sadana B Kaur , H . *India Prevention of Corruption*  
*Act 1947 in Sharma M*, (New Delhi) 2011. Kitab Mahal Publis. p. 932.
- [Malec (ed.)] *Public Attitude toward Corruption: Twenty-Five year of Research in Fredrickson Ca. H (1993)*  
*Ethics and Public Administration*, L K Malec . Sharpe M.E (ed.)
- [Ikoiwak ()] *Public officials and corruption in Nigeria*, E A Ikoiwak . 1987. 1960-1979. Indian Journals of Public  
Administration.
- [Ferrerabend and Feiravbend (ed.) ()] *Systematic Conditions of Political Aggression: An Application of Frustra-*  
*tion -Aggression Theory in*, I K Ferrerabend , R Feiravbend . Feiraben R. L, and Ted, R.G ( (ed.) 1972. New  
Jersey; Englewood Cliff: Practice -Hall Inc. (ed s) Anger Violence and Politics: Theories and Research)
- [Olatunde ()] *Tackling Corrupt Tendencies Through Application of Due Process: The CBN Experience, in*  
*Owolabi E. A (2007) Corruption and Financial Crimes in Nigeria, Genesis, Trend and Consequences*, S  
Olatunde . [www,cenbank.org/OUT/.../2007/TRANSPARENCY.2007.PDF](http://www.cenbank.org/OUT/.../2007/TRANSPARENCY.2007.PDF) 2007. p. .
- [Kennedy ()] *The Hidden Cost of Corruption: who are the Biggest Victims of Widespread Bribery, available at*  
*www*, S Kennedy . [pbs.org/.../nigeria-thehidden-cost-of-corruption.html](http://pbs.org/.../nigeria-thehidden-cost-of-corruption.html) 2009.