

Chop Politics and Economic Development in Nigeria: A Study of Multiple Pension by former Political Office holders

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Abstract

The return to civilian rule and purported entrenchment of the rule of law in Nigeria has occasioned the dawn of elite gangsterism and collusion in pillage of public funds. Law making and sundry processes of legislative programmes have variously been skewed along interests of the ruling class. Elected public officers at the executive arm of government at national and state levels such as the President and Governors have fixed terms of office. A President is eligible for pension after “retirement”. They must leave after two terms. According to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and a bill passed by the National Assembly in November 2010, former Presidents, Heads of State, Heads of federal legislative Houses (Senate and House of Representatives) and Chief Justice qualify for remuneration on successful completion of their term of office. Governors were not included in the bill but they later colluded with state houses of assemblies to get juicy packages at retirement. What is more, these former governors and heads of legislative assemblies have incidentally turned out Senate Presidents and governors as appropriate to qualify for multiple pensions. This study which is situated within the tenets of conspiracy theory thus interrogates the rationale for the payment of multiple pension on former public office holders for serving the country and or their states for a maximum of 8 years whereas civil servants who served meritoriously for 35 years are having running battles to access their pensions in the same country. The study uses mainly secondary sources of information and surmises that those who occupy two or more elective public offices deserving of pensions should get paid the value for their last office salary.

Keywords: Chop Politics, Political Corruption, Economic Development, Multiple Pensions, Severance Allowances, Public Office Holders, Retirement

Introduction

Nigeria is no doubt blessed with an eclectic mix of people, such heterogeneity, which could be the envy of the world. Its politics is unique, as a country where anything can happen and nothing will happen (Akhigbe, 2015). People’s behaviour is often influenced ‘by what others do and by what others think should be done’(Bicchieri, Lindemans and Jiang, 2014;Nche, 2011). This means that the way people think and act is often dependent on what others think and do.

At independence in 1960, Nigeria was touted as an emergent African state with great prospects to lead the continent out of underdevelopment and economic dependency, yet about six (6) decades of post independence, the country is stuck in extreme poverty, massive corruption and kleptomania, acute lack of critical infrastructure, crisis-ridden, morally bankrupt and leadership-deficiency (Imhonopi and Ugochukwu, 2013). The emergent Nigerian political leadership are those breed of people that act in the political arena without political ideology (Osuji, 2014). They do not implement known political ideologies like capitalism, socialism, communism, fascism, mercantilism, corporatism, liberalism, conservatism but exploit all platforms on how to get as much money, opportunity, advantage and access to the national treasury for personal aggrandizement. Like in the hypothetical Hobbesian state of nature, most Nigerian political leaders maximize their personal interests at the expense of the people (including the state) resulting in perennial conflict/violence by many against all and while the citizens live in socio-political and economic insecurity where rule of law is meaningless and peoples' lives are worthless. Hence, those who can claw their ways to national or state politics and treasury mete and dole as much public resources as possible onto themselves with reckless abandonment.

What is more, prebendalism as an official form of corruption or kleptocracy has become almost a life style for most political office holders in Nigeria (Momoh, 2016). Nigeria has produced several hundred billion dollars worth of oil since independence, but ordinary Nigerians have derived appallingly little benefit from all of that wealth. This situation exists primarily because successive governments, both military and civilian, have stolen or misused much of Nigeria's tremendous oil wealth (Human Rights Watch, 2007). The magnitude of corruption in public places in Nigeria is unimaginable and systemic. Every opportunity is a ploy to stealing, looting and diverting public treasury into personal use. Indeed, 'corruption in Nigeria' is an issue that has, alarmingly, been deemed worthy of its own Wikipedia page (Soyemi, 2015). The how of revenue generation is made simple with availability of crude oil which invariably created the concept of national cake. Nigerian political leaders are not bordered about wealth creation and revenue generation. Everybody shares from the national cake being revenue from oil that has made lame governments and rendered the state perpetually rentier.

Ideally, every government pursues economic development by trying to achieve macroeconomic objectives in a particular system of government (Dang, 2013). The federation of Nigeria pursues her macroeconomic objectives by performing the functions of resource allocation, income distribution/redistribution, and economic stabilization within the prism of federalism with a central

government, that is, federal government and its component units in forms of states and local governments (Buhari, 2001; Likita, 1999). This fragmentation of Nigeria into a multiplicity of centrally funded, sub-national state and local governments has vastly expanded and multiplied the access points and conduits for the individual and sectional appropriation of public power and resources. Indeed, Suberu (2013, p. 79) observes that "the Nigerian federal system operates almost exclusively as a mechanism for the intergovernmental distribution and ethno-political appropriation of centrally collected oil revenues. In short, the system abets, and is enmeshed and subsumed in an overall context of prebendal, neo-patrimonial politics".

Nonetheless, political corruption stands very tall amongst the factors militating against socio-economic and political development of Nigeria. Since independence, political leadership and corruption have, like Siamese twins, become interwoven and inseparable in notoriety against economic stabilization in Nigeria (Agekameh, 2014). The Nigerian ruling class has high propensity for corruption, public fund grabbing, looting, personalizing public resources, skewed allocation of values, nepotism and parochialism in character. The constitution grants a lot of benefits to the elites in Nigeria. They have access to full salary as pension for life after serving as President, Vice President or head of the federal legislature or judiciary. In which case, such persons whose greatest number of years in service is not more than 8 years only, are to be paid their full salaries for life, whereas most Nigerian workers who laboured for no less than 35 years in service only get a fraction of their salaries as pensions that are rarely paid. Interestingly, public office holders save their salaries for the period they are in office as the state feeds and accommodates them and also takes care of their general needs (Iredia, 2019). Unfortunately, many state assemblies have passed similar laws but in horrendous manners granting their governors bogus salaries and life pensions. Between 2007 till date, about 21 states of Nigeria have joined the bandwagon in a licentious manner that smacks of irresponsibility and commitment to heighten cost of governance at the expense of the governed.

This study therefore examines how this *chop politics* as a political ideology among the Nigerian ruling class impacts on economic development of Nigeria with particular reference to meting and doling of unconscionable life pension for former political leaders who indulge in multiple remunerations as a way of festering their own nests towards end of tenure without recourse to the plight of the citizenry. It also x-rays psycho-political and economic implications of this form of high level corruption in relation to the plight of retiring Nigerian public servants.

Literature Review and Conceptual Clarifications

It is observable especially from the social contract theories that material prosperity and high quality of life are supposed universal goals for governments across the globe. How various governments strive to achieve this laudable objective defines its political capabilities, responsiveness and willingness to realizing the general will which drives the state. The state in the developing societies has been enmeshed in struggle for quality living standard for its citizenry but their respective governments especially those in the sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria inclusive, have rather constituted machineries for further subjugation of the masses.

This paper will thus be best comprehensible if the dialectics of political leadership are properly synchronized with the economic situation of the citizens of Nigeria. Thus, the following terms and concepts are redefined for ease of common perspectives with the authors in the context of the study: economic development, parameters for measuring economic development, chop politics, political corruption, what constitutes public office holding, and, double/multiple pension.

Economic Development

This is a multivariate concept that has defiled single satisfactory definition. Scholars have busted its meaning from varied dimensions, hence describing and not defining it in finality. It considers the living standard of a country's population in terms of the nature of freedom they enjoy, their economic well-being, access to quality medicare, access to basic education and literacy rate, quality housing, average life expectancy, poverty indices, rate of (un)employment, infant and maternal mortality, per capita income, number of out of school children, rate of youth restiveness, etc. No wonder, Adams (2006) defines it as the elimination or reduction in poverty, inequality, and unemployment within a growing economy. Mansell and Wehn (1998) say that economic development involves economic growth, namely the increase in per capita income and attainment of standard of living equivalent to that of industrialized nations. In the above definitions, economic growth stands as a transiting phenomenon via which economic development is achieved.

Thence, economic development is the expansion of capacities that contribute to the advancement of society through the realization of individual, firm and community potential measured in sustained prosperity and quality of life through innovation, lowered transaction costs, and the utilization of capabilities towards the responsible production and diffusion of goods and services. Hence, it manifests in effective institutions grounded in norms of openness, tolerance for risk, appreciation for

diversity, and confidence in the realization of mutual gain for the public and the private sector. Hence, Rodney (1972, p. 9) expressed economic development to “imply increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, increased self-discipline and responsibility, and improved material well-being”. Impliedly, Ettah (2012, p. 35) observed that economic development “has at least three core values: life sustenance (the ability to meet basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing), self-esteem (to be a person, to have self-worth) and, freedom from servitude (to be able to choose)”.

Economic development is thus a multidimensional concept that describes processes by which the overall health (average life expectancy, rate of infant and maternal mortality, access to affordable medicare), economic well-being (measured in terms of GDP per capita, (un)employment rate, poverty indices, housing, food security, road density, provision of public infrastructure and basic amenities), and academic level (literacy rate, access to basic but functional education, quality of tertiary/higher education – *sabification*, skill and competence) of the general population of a society improve.

What then is *Chop Politics*?

Well, this is not what you might think but connotatively it would end in the dictionary meaning of the word. *Chop politics* is a creation from a Nigerian slang *come chop* referring to come and eat. It describes clearly a networking formula devised by Nigerian politicians in sharing the ‘national cake’ (Akhigbe, 2015). This refers processes, permissible and otherwise, through which Nigerian public office holders fritter, loot, convert and personalize public fund. Evidently, people flock into political parties and public office holders not necessarily because of what they can contribute to move the state forward but essentially for what they hope to corner into their pockets as well as a strategy for satisfying their cronies. Call it bread and butter politics. The Nigerian political class is engrossed with resources allocation and distribution and not generation. Consequently, the political class manipulates the machinery of government to feather their nest while the institutions of government wither without care. In this case, the rest of the people are abandoned and made vulnerable to whatever vicissitudes of life that comes their way (Agekameh, 2014). *Chop politics* is thus a definition of a popular Nigerian political ideology that explains political corruption and kleptomania whereby public office holders loot, steal and brazenly indulge in primitive accumulation at the expense of the state and the people. It refers to institutionalized political/bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria where access to state implies personalization of its machineries for personal gains. Public office holders determine who gets what by allocating values according to their whims and caprices. If you are not with them, you are estranged

from power and its spoils. Crude oil bakes national cake while Nigerians struggle for political powers in order to get their own share of the cake. This further explains the zero-sum nature of Nigerian politics and why it is a do or die affair. Chop politics is fortune telling and getting. Hence, the flouring maxim of 'if you do not beat them, you join them'. Who wants to stay away from power and its enormous benefits in Nigeria?

Political Corruption

Of all the reasons that may have been responsible for Nigeria's socio-economic stagnation, the phenomenon of corruption stands prominently in the vista (Agekameh, 2014). It has been the bane of legitimacy, democratic stability and socio-economic and political development in Nigeria (Ogundiya, 2009). Dangled from political independence in 1960 through first republic, military rule to democratic dispensation in the fourth republic, most Nigerians had expected achievement of development but about 20 years down the line, the state is yet to witness politico-economic stability and development. The average Nigerian has become extremely pauperized, disillusioned and overwhelmingly alienated from the government because the political class has deepened their preying on the vast resources of the country. The Transparency International (1998) cited in Amundsen (1999) succinctly posits that “corruption is one of the greatest challenges of the contemporary world that undermines good government; fundamentally distorts public policy, leads to the misallocation of resources, harms private sector development and particularly hurts the poor”. At that, Amundsen (1999) contends that the issue of corruption has to some extent entered the political and economic sciences from the new interest in the role of the state in the developing world, and in particular from the idea that the state is an indispensable instrument for economic development. In that instance, the World Bank developed a working definition which sees corruption as “abuse of public power for private benefit” as aptly corroborated by Transparency International which also see corruption as the “abuse of entrusted power for private gain”. This paper is rather interested in the politics of state enacted laws for payment of horrendous and licentious jumbo life packages as pension to ex-governors and their deputies in a country where many states are struggling to pay basic salaries to their workers hence will dwell more with political corruption and kleptomania as most pungent forms of the malaise.

According to Transparency International, political corruption is a manipulation of policies, institutions and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth. Political or *grand* corruption takes place

at the high levels of the political system. It occurs when the politicians and state agents, who are entitled to make and enforce the laws in the name of the people, are themselves corrupt. Political corruption does not only lead to the misallocation of resources, it also affects the manner in which decisions are made. It influences the institutions of government and the political system thereby resulting in institutional decay. Political corruption is therefore something more than a deviation from formal and written legal norms, from professional codes of ethics and court rulings. Political corruption is when laws and regulations are more or less systematically abused by the rulers, side-stepped, ignored, or even tailored to fit certain predetermined interests.

Who are Public Office Holders?

Public Office Holders are those officials responsible for high-level decision making in government. This category of persons head, manage, direct and are in-charge of day-to-day affairs of public administration at their level. They are mainly politicians elected into public positions of trust and their appointees. Every public office holder is a public servant but every public servant is not a public office holder. Thence, the list of public office holders (especially for the purposes of this study) in Nigeria include the following:

1. The President of the Federation
2. The Vice-President of the federation
3. The President and Deputy President of the Senate, Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives and Speakers and Deputy Speakers of Houses of Assembly of States and all members and staff of legislative houses [including Councillors where they still exist]
4. Governors and Deputy Governors of States
5. Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice of the Supreme Court, President and Justice of the Court of Appeal
6. Attorney-General of the Federation and Attorney-General of each state
7. Minister of the Government of the Federation and Commissioners of the Governments of the States

The list continues but this study focuses on the jumbo packages and life pensions to former governors, their deputies and speakers of state houses of assembly.

Double and Multiple Pension for Public Office Holders

According to Garner and Black (2004) pension means regular payments made by the state to the disabled, widowed or by a former employer to an employee after long service or a periodical payment made especially by government, company or an employer in consideration of past services. In a similar

vein, the Encyclopedia Britannica defines pension as a series of periodic money payments made to a person who retires from employment because of age, disability, or the completion of an agreed span of service. The 2004 pension reform Act that introduced contributory pension in Nigeria however occasioned a slight redefinition of the concept of pension. Thence, pension became a regular payment made during a person's retirement from an investment fund or account to which that person and their employer(s) contributed during their time as an active member of the labour force. The payments generally continue for the remainder of the natural life of the recipient, and sometimes to a widow or other survivor. This implies that retired civil/public servants are paid monthly from a poll/investment contributed by the workers and their employers for the formers' subsistence at retirement. This category of workers are by age and physical strength not usually capable of taking up other jobs upon retirement. They thus depend upon their contributions (investment in pension) for sustenance at old age because the Nigerian system does not have social security and welfare for the aged and vulnerable. Nevertheless, public office holders are elected and appointed political office holders manning the 3 key arms of government (the executive, legislature and judiciary) who hold office for a period not more than 8 years in case of two tenures. They are more or less politicians who win elections into public positions of trust and their appointees. This category of persons and occupant of exalted offices constitute the ruling class at their various levels of government in Nigeria. They are the shakers and movers of politics at their levels of governments.

From payment of severance allowances to public office holders as determined by the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) (a body mandated by the constitution to determine salaries, allowances and other remunerations of public officers in Niger), over 21 state house of assemblies in Nigeria have enacted laws granting life pension and jumbo packages to former governors, deputies and in some cases Speakers and in very few states the entire law makers. Who cares? It is their turn and share of the national cake. *Chop I chop*, the country suffers but it does not concern me so long as I can amass as much wealth as possible. RMAFC approved payment of 300% basic salary as severance allowances for political office holders on leaving office but various states' Houses of Assembly had approved a wide range of entitlements for ex-governors and their deputies, including legislators. Going by the postulations of the RMAFC, the president draws a total of N10.5 million; the Vice President N9.1 million while Senators, Ministers, Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), head of Service and chairmen of constitutional bodies and members of the house

of representatives will get N6 million each. At the state level, Governors will get about N6.7 million while local government Chairmen will get around N2.7 million each across the federation.

Interestingly, unlike their regular civil/public servant counterparts, these public office holders constitute a very minute proportion of the population of Nigeria, who contribute very little, earn very big and are maximally remunerated and provided for from the public treasury. They do not spend their salaries and multiple allowances while their tenures last. They drive, use government vehicles, live in government beautiful houses, eat food provided by the government, travel on chartered flights, push their medical expenses to the government including those of their entire families. While in office, they are the state and commanders of all state forces and apparatuses. Whatever they wish is willed by the state. Hence, they care very little about the people because there exists walls between them.

Remarkably, the 1999 Constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria did not only guarantee right to pension and gratuities to citizens in the public service of a state or federation but goes on in the exclusive legislative list in item 44 to state clearly that pension and gratuities fall within the legislative competence of the National Assembly (Abifarin and Olatoke, 2017). Invariably, State House of Assemblies do not have powers to legislate on pension and gratuity. The true position of the law of pension and gratuities in Nigeria is that while Pension Act 1979 which was replaced by Pension Reform Act 2004 is for civil servants, public officers or public office holders ought to be given their own Pension Act in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. Therefore, the practice whereby each State House of Assembly is enacting pension law for ex-governors is illegal and unconstitutional. It is only the National Assembly that has powers to make pension and gratuity law for our public officers in Nigeria and this includes the governors and their deputies.

Theoretical Framework

In recent years, scholars have paid increasing attention to beliefs in narratives (false and otherwise) that exaggerate, idealize, or misconstrue reality, but the coming together of a group of persons or class to conceive and undertake action(s) for themselves without recourse to their possible implications on the generality of the people has continued to elicit research and scholarship. This paper thus adopts conspiracy theory as a theoretical framework for unraveling the trappings and dialectics of the actions and inactions of the political class in relation to payment of life pension to former governors and their deputies as well as how it affects the economic wellbeing of the masses in Nigeria. Conspiracy theory, as a matter of fact, is defined as a subset of false narratives in which the ultimate cause of an event is

believed to be due to a malevolent plot by multiple actors working together (Bale, 2007; Swami and Furnham, 2012). It sees public office holders (the President, Vice President, Senators, Ministers, Governors, deputies, etc) as a group within the circle of the ruling class who is determined to feather their nest against the plight of the people they are meant to cater for and protect. Towing about the same line, Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2014) cited in Bjerg and Presskorn-Thygesen (2016, p. 9) defines it as ‘a theory that explains an event or set of circumstances as the result of a secret plot by usually powerful conspirators.’ Hence, drawing upon the definition of Ucinski, Klofstad and Atkinson (2016, p. 2), we can define ”conspiracy theory as a proposed explanation of events that cites as a main causal factor a small group of persons (the conspirators) acting in secret for their own benefit, against the common good.” Consequently, Douglas, Sutton, and Cichocka (2017, p. 540) are of the view amidst casually that "conspiracy explanations are also informed by various social motivations, including the desire to belong and to maintain a positive relationship. A related property of conspiracy theories is that they can protect cherished beliefs (e.g., primitive capital accumulation, propensity to personalize state apparatuses, etc) by casting overwhelmingly disconfirmatory evidence as the product of a conspiracy (Lewandowsky, Oberauer and Gignac, 2013). Therefore, conspiracy theory describes the idea that someone, or a group of people, act secretly, with the goal of achieving power, wealth, influence, or other benefits (Hodapp and Von Kannon, 2008, p. 9).

The above paintings, description and definitions demonstrate interesting spectrum for understanding the activities of the Nigerian political class in relation to resources allocation and distribution. The meting and doling of resources to and for cronies and persons associated and related to political office holders is a function of the design to acquire wealth, influence and power for dynasty and perpetual recognition without attending to the needs of the masses. The class or group in this case refers to the executive and the legislature who conspire to cede and reward themselves in manners that are rather unbecoming in the eyes of the people but a ploy to maintain and sustain their class and level upon leaving office. Getting the state house of assemblies to enact laws granting life pension to former governors and deputies is simply a practice engineered by governors and their cronies as powerful and very influential personalities, who attempt to conceal their role, but in the end are direct beneficiaries of the plot. It is cyclic and communicable because it is perpetuated by a class of persons who can make or mar their various domains of power; hence the rate of replication by many states in Nigeria.

Multiple Payment and Jumbo Pension Payment to Public Office Holders: A Manifestation of Chop Politics in Nigeria

It has become part of our political culture that political office holders are “entitled” to whopping salaries, allowances and severance allowances. In most cases, the politicians carved out these opportunities to help themselves with public resources because they wanted to get their own share of the national cake. Availability of petro-dollar which made the Nigerian state rentier, turned government business into nobody’s business and paved sustainable platform for corrupt political leadership is enabling chopping. Access to the state is access to wealth depending on the occupants’ kleptocratic shrewdness. Most state governors have arranged for themselves generous pension packages ranging from 100% pay for life equal to the salary of the incumbent governor, generous medical allowances for them and their family members, house(s) and furniture allowances, annual holiday provision, and provisions for personal staff, vehicles and security. These are in addition to a generous severance package. See table 1 for details of the jumbo pay packages across states of the federation according to state pension laws for ex-governors and deputies.

Undoubtedly, the jumbo life salaries and pensions provided by state house of assemblies for former governors, their deputies and speakers are pointers to their own shortcomings. They carted funds that would have been used to provide and maintain public infrastructure in terms of roads, electricity, hospitals, security, and functional education. Hence, they resort to foreign medical treatments, arranged for periodic replacement of vehicles for their enjoyment, move around with robots of security men, buy and maintain sound proof generating sets and send their children overseas for quality education where they deplete the country’s forex. If they had instituted an effective national old-age pension scheme they wouldn’t be worried about their future (Enahoro, 2015).

Double Pension/Payments for Public Office Holders: A Breach of the Code of Conduct

Many of the former Governors are now serving Senators, Ministers, etc. They moved from holding gubernatorial office positions to becoming senators or ministers of the federal republic thereby maintaining positions of public office. As public officers: senators, ministers, governors and their deputies are not expected to receive double payment from their present office and pension from their respective State Pension Schemes. The Code of Conduct for Public Officers contained in the fifth schedule to the 1999 Constitution provides that:

1. A public officer shall not put himself in a position where his personal interest conflicts with his duties and responsibilities.

2. Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing paragraph, a public officer shall not receive or be paid the emoluments of any public office at the same time as he receives or is paid the emoluments of any other public office; or
3. The President, Vice -President, Governor, Deputy Governor, Ministers of the Government of the Federation and Commissioners of the Governments of the States, members of the National Assembly and of the Houses of Assembly of the States, and such other public officers or persons as the National Assembly may by law prescribe shall not maintain or operate a bank account in any country outside Nigeria.
4. A public officer shall not, after his retirement from public service and while receiving pension from public funds, accept more than one remuneration position as chairman, director or employee of -
 - a) A company owned or controlled by the government; or
 - b) Any public authority.

4(2) A retired public servant shall not receive any other remuneration from public funds in addition to his pension and the emolument of such one remunerative position.

To the extent of the foregoing, the poser is, do the above sections of the code of conduct for public officers hold sway for Governors and Deputy Governors in Nigeria? Even at the existence of the states' pension laws, the constitution of the federal republic holds supreme and cannot be subservient to any other law(s) made by any section of the country thereof. The former governors and deputies who moved from holding public positions in their states to the federal government are not qualified to receive pension and sundry allowances from their states so long as they get paid as Senators, Ministers or any other office remunerated from the public treasury. Their former offices as governors and deputies are supposed to have earned severance gratuities as determined by the RMAFC and not state house of assembly concocted pensions. It is immoral and unethical for an individual to receive double pay at the same time from public funds. Such pensions are not just illegal but amplification of corruption for them to be remunerated twice or more from public fund.

Chop Politics and Economic Underdevelopment in Nigeria: A Glaring Connection

Amidst varied literature, Leftwich (1996) argues that what matters for development is not the system of government, or regime type –that is, whether it is democratic or not but the type of state. Crucially for him, it is not the technical and administrative arrangements which determine the character and competence of the state, but the politics which both generates and sustains the state, irrespective of

whether the state is democratic or not. Hence, democracy is just a system of government but the character of politics in Nigeria from first republic through military rule down to second, third and even this fourth republic, has remained zero-sum, do or die owing to low autonomization of the state which has degenerated into using the latter as the quickest means of capital accumulation. Politics in Nigeria has been synonymous with corruption. Nigeria has constantly faced the challenge of political corruption and high cost of governance, which has hindered her developmental drive (Aliyu, 2003; Madichie, 2005; Maduagwe, 1996). In developing nations like Nigeria, policies of government appear to be formulated and implemented for the purpose of satisfying the interest of the few - the elites in the society to the detriment of the people. Estimating the impacts of corruption Nwabuzor (2005) stated that World Bank studies put corruption at over \$1 trillion per year accounting for up to 12% of the Gross Domestic Product of nations like Nigeria, Kenya and Venezuela.

It is thus instructive to note that corruption is amplified by the political ideology of chop politics as developed by Africans upon their refusal to adopt any known Western political ideology (Osuji, 2014). Chop politics in this case refers to cronyism, nepotism, ethnicization and religionization of politics, favouritism, godfatherism, embezzlement, mismanagement, diversion of public funds, indulgence in over invoicing, contract splitting and skewed allocation/distribution of values such as citing of projects, appointments and recruitment processes all because a person or certain group of persons are to benefit. It occasions discrimination and prebendalism of all sorts. Chop politics clearly results in high cost of governance which has rendered Nigerian democracy one if not the costliest in the world. The political class keeps grabbing, carting and misappropriating public resources unto themselves because it is almost agreed in their circle that Nigeria must not function properly.

In that instance, the political leadership enmeshed in this *bread and butter politics* are bereft of resources with which to pursue economic development goals. They rather achieve their pockets and those of their cronies which invariably turned their statutory duties. Such key public objectives as provision of infrastructural facilities, employment generation, increment in literacy level, high standard of living for the people, increased GDP per capita, respect for dignity of human life and person, freedom from basic needs, security of life and property are sacrificed for “benefit capturing” (Ekong, 1997). ‘Benefit capture’, according to Ekong depicts a scenario where benefits that should have accrued to the end-user or beneficiary of designed projects are “captured” away at every stage of the project’s development. It describes illegal diversion or legal misappropriation of benefits (financial and other wise) meant for a certain people or group (state, region, local government, ministry, village,

organization, etc.), such that the people or group for which such benefits were meant see little or nothing of such benefits. Clearly, chop politics leads to the impoverishment of a greater part of the populace.

Owing largely to poor health services delivery in Nigeria, life expectancy according to WHO statistics is around 54.5 which is the lowest in all of West Africa. On top of that, there is a high child and maternal mortality rate and the widespread growth of polio virus. In fact, one out of every five children that are born in Nigeria will die before they reach the age of five. A lot of expectant mothers in Nigeria die from pregnancy complications every year. A Nigerian woman's chances of death during pregnancy or childbirth is 1 in 13. 31.5% of Nigerians still struggle to access clean water with only a paltry 29% of the entire population have access to improved sanitation facilities, compared to the 71% that are still struggling. The World Poverty Clock has revealed that 91,885,874 people in Nigeria now live in extreme poverty (Sahara Reporters, 2019). According to UNICEF (2019), one in every five of the world's out-of-school children is in Nigeria, about 10.5 million of the country's children aged 5-14 years are not in school. Only 61 percent of 6-11 year-olds regularly attend primary school and only 35.6 percent of children aged 36-59 months receive early childhood education. Nigeria adult literacy rate was at level of 59.6 % in 2015, up from 51.1 % in 2008.

Citing the National Bureau of Statistics reports, Carsten (2018) stated that “as of Q3 2018, the calculated unemployment rate was 23.1 percent, the underemployment rate was 20.1 percent, and the combined unemployment and underemployment rate was 43.3 percent”. It averaged 12.31 percent from 2006 until 2018, reaching an all time high of 23.10 percent in the third quarter of 2018 and a record low of 5.10 percent in the fourth quarter of 2010 (Trading Economics, n.d). This represents a steady rise from 18.1 percent in 2017. Unfortunately, information from the National Bureau of Statistics (2016) cited in Longe (2017, p. 63) indicated that a total of 52million citizens within the economically active population of Nigeria is jobless and this figure consisted mostly of newly qualified university graduates. Nigeria is holding the 31 position by nominal GDP with a national debt in 2017 was 112,890 millions of dollars, (28.42% debt-to-GDP ratio) and its public debt per capita is 576\$ dollars per inhabitant.

Conclusion

Parochialism, prebendalism, political corruption and kleptomania as facets of the reigning political ideology in Nigeria is dealing a devastating blow on the economy and people of Nigeria. Chop I chop,

stealing, mismanagement, looting and squandermania subsumed in primitive accumulation in order to carter for days/years outside public office have enormously shaped the character of Nigerian politics and destroyed public institutions. It is endemic, systemic, hydra-headed and common in such manner that it has become the norm rather than the exception. The elites milk the Nigerian economy and people dry and render the state frail, indebted, subservient and without significant might in the international scene thereby pushing citizens into forced international migration, extreme poverty, violence, banditry, brigandage and insurgency.

Recommendations

Determination and payment of both severance allowances and pension to public office holders in Nigeria and states of the federation should not be detrimental and burdensome to the economy. Constitutional provisions should be followed by the RMAFC and any other body that would determine whatever rewards and remunerations that would be granted to public officers. As provided for in the code of conduct for public officers, no one should receive two or more remunerations from the public fund at the same time. Since civil servants who served Nigeria for 35 years contribute to their pension, the same formular should be adopted for public office holders if they must receive pensions. Otherwise, severance allowance is enough for them. Service of a state for two terms of four years each is not up to 10 years that qualify a civil servant to enjoy pension under the Pension Act of 1979. Multiple remunerations from the public treasury by former governors and their deputies from the public officers should be proscribed by law. It is an anti-people policy that promotes corruption and makes public offices more attractive to politicians. An ex-governor who is a serving senator should take only one remuneration. He takes either pension or his salary and allowances as a senator.

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