Challenges Facing Sub-Saharan Africa: The Problem of Governance

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Abstract

According to the International Monetary Fund's Millennium Development Goals Reports, Sub-Saharan Africa lags behind other regions on development indicators (IMF, 2011) because the region still faces many challenges (United Nations, 2011). Such challenges include but are not limited to: weak infrastructure, violent conflicts and internecine wars, heavy debt burden, declining investments, capital flight, leadership crisis, etc. (Okereke, 2009). The following is an exploratory study of the performances of Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Congo since independence along with sporadic references to other countries in the region compared to countries in other parts of the world in an effort to shade more light as to why the region continues to lag behind. Paper reveals that people who seek public and political offices in the region do so mainly because of economic enrichment opportunities that accompany such offices; holders of public and political offices in the region are mostly interested in what they and their supporters can steal while in office in the short run. The paper concludes that the greatest impediment to social and economic development in the region is absence of good governance by committed leaders and suggests that people who hold public and political offices in the region should be held accountable for their actions.

Key Words: Challenges; Development; Sub-Saharan Africa; Governance; Corruption

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Background: Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is a term used to refer to the geographical area of the continent of Africa that lies south of the Sahara. The region is made up of people from more than 800 ethnic and linguistic groups (McNamara, 1985) who inhabit some 50 countries with a combined population of more than 1 billion in 2015 (World Bank, 2016a). According to the International Monetary Fund's 2011 Millennium Development Goals Reports, SSA lags behind other regions on development indicators (IMF, 2011) because it still faces many challenges (United Nations, 2011). Such challenges include but are not limited to: weak infrastructure, violent conflicts and internecine wars, heavy debt burden, declining investments, capital flight, leadership crisis, adverse climatic conditions, and high ethno-linguistic fractionalization (Okereke, 2009). Another serious challenge facing SSA in today's world is the "president-for-life" mentality held by the political elite in the region (Chan, Kruhly, & Olivennes, 2016; Sogbaike, 2016; Nwanganga, 2015). With regard to infrastructure, only about twenty-five percent of the region's 2 million kilometers of road is paved; only about thirty-three percent of rural SSA population has access to roadways and only 55,000 kilometers of the 70,000 kilometers of railroad in the region is operational (Carruthers, Krishnam Ani, and Murray, 2009) and seventy-four percent of the people in the region lack access to electricity compared to twenty-eight percent of people in developing countries as a whole (World Health Organization, 2009).

Incidence of violent conflicts and internecine wars is also a major challenge in the region. For example, since 1980, no less than 28 Sub-Saharan states have been at war (Shah, 2010) claiming more than 10 million victims, most of whom are civilians (Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2000). The region is also dealing with the problem of huge debt overhang. The extension of official bilateral and multilateral loans to SSA countries during the cold war rivalry, coupled with the eagerness of international commercial banks to recycle surplus petrodollars which resulted from oil price increases in the 1970s, led to huge debt overhang in many SSA countries (Abbott, 1993).

For example, in 1973, the region's debt burden was $13.1 billion, but by 1997, it was more than $315 billion, exceeding total GNP for the whole region (Kendie, 1998). But, in spite of having received more than $400 billion in loans, SSA remains the only part of the world experiencing absolute declines on virtually all indices of socioeconomic development (Heleta, 2007).

The region is also confronted with the issue of declining investment flows for various reasons especially, corruption. The 3rd Annual Report of the United States International Trade Commission (2002), identified official corruption, political instability, and economic uncertainty as crucial impediments to investments in the region and warned that investments will continue to decline if such problems persist (USITC, 2002). From all indications, these practices have continued and the region continues to experience declining investment flows; an analysis of capital flows to and from SSA countries by Ndikumana and Boyce (2008) revealed that instead of attracting foreign investments, the region experiences massive outflow of capital. According to them, the outflow exceeds the region's foreign liabilities, which ironically makes SSA a "net creditor" to the rest of the world. Citing the cases of Sani Abacha of Nigeria and Mobutu of Congo (both of whom siphoned billions of dollars from their respective countries into their private bank accounts overseas), Ayitteh (1992) says that rather than using available funds to develop their economies, African political elites put the funds into their private bank accounts in international financial institutions who, many a time, are aware that such funds were acquired surreptitiously.

Another problem that is often identified as impeding social and economic development in the region is adverse weather and climatic conditions (Hellmuth, Moorhead, Thompson, and Williams, 2007). And, according to the United Nations' Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries (2009), 32 of the 49 countries where adverse weather and climatic conditions are a hindrance not only to economic growth but also to food production and availability of drinking water are in SSA. Other obstacles which are often identified as negatively affecting social and economic development in the region are ethnic differentiations, linguistic heterogeneity, and group fractionalization (Easterly and Levine, 1997). This ethno-linguistic fractionalization problem resulted from the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 under the chairmanship of Otto von Bismarck when Belgium, France, Great Britain, Germany, and Portugal partitioned the continent of Africa into colonies (Rowley, 2000) and instituted a geo-political structure designed to facilitate colonial "divide and rule" style of administration and to expedite the extraction of natural resources without regard to ethnic and cultural differences (Alesina, Devleeschauwer, Easterly, Kurlat, & Wacziarg, 2003). Other major hindrances to social and economic development in SSA include factors such as misguided leadership and governance, systemic corruption, economic mismanagement, political tyranny, sit-tight leaders in office, flagrant violations of human rights and military vandalism (Ayittey, 2002).

There is no doubt that the impediments to social and economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa are many. So, people can choose to emphasize one or the other. One response that tends to resonate quite often-especially among Africa's political and economic elites along with some intellectuals-is the colonization and imperialism argument (Nwanganga, 2016). Proponents argue that the region is economically weak because it was forced by European colonial administrations to export primary products at relatively low prices and to import manufactured goods from European countries at relatively high prices (Rowley, 2000). According to this argument, this phenomenon did not only drain capital from the region, it created an environment that continues to impede social and economic development in the region (Goucher, LeGuin, and Walton, 1998; Heleta, 2007). Others have argued that SSA is economically weak because the colonial policy of 'divide and rule' (which was inherited by the elite at independence) did not encourage the development of participatory forms of government (Rowley, 2000). Still, others argue that the region is weak because it was subjected to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade during which it lost up to 12 million men and women (Nunn, 2006; Ross, 2007). There is even the suggestion that the countries that are the poorest in the region today, are the ones from which the most slaves were taken (Nunn as in Wall Street Journal, 2008).

No doubt, these are credible arguments; during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the colonization of Sub-Saharan Africa, the region suffered tremendously both in terms of loss of human capital and in terms of loss of natural resources. That mostly explains why there was much jubilation and hope when the countries began to gain independence from their colonial masters in the late 1950s-Ghana in 1957; Guinea in 1958-into the 1960s-Nigeria and 16 other African territories gained independence in 1960; Uganda in 1962; Kenya in 1963; etc. (Talton, n.d). Politicians, campaigning for power in their respective countries, promised not only to liberate the people from oppressive colonial administrations but also to provide education, medical care, employment, and a better life for all.

The people were made to believe that there was a new dawn in Africa as was evident in the speech Kwame Nkrumah, the new President of Ghana delivered at midnight on March 6, 1957 as the Union Jack was lowered and the new Ghanaian flag hoisted in its place. President Nkrumah told the over 100,000 people present that:

> *At long last, the battle has ended! And thus Ghana, your beloved country, is free for ever…… We are not waiting; we shall no more go back to sleep…… Today, from now on, there is a new African in the world and that new African is ready to fight his own battle and show that after all, the black man is capable of managing his own affairs. We are going to demonstrate to the world, to the other nations, young as we are, that we are prepared to lay our own foundation* (Lazarus, 1986:49).

And in Congo, on Independence Day, June 30th, 1960 Patrice Lumumba, the first prime minister of Congo, delivered a speech in the presence of the King of Belgium, denouncing the atrocities of colonial rule and declaring that Congo will establish a government and an economy that will work for the people:

> *We are going to show the world what the black man can do when he works in freedom, and we are going to make of the Congo the center of the sun's radiance for all of Africa. We are going to keep watch over the lands of our country so that they truly profit her children. We are going to restore ancient laws and make new ones which will be just and noble…… The Congo's independence marks a decisive step towards the liberation of the entire African continent (Talton, n.d.:3)*

Similar speeches were made by politician's eager to take over the reins of power in other countries leading the people to believe that a new dawn was truly amidst.

With the colonial administrations long gone, where does Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) stand today after close to six decades of independence? In hindsight, what has happened to the great expectations that attended the rhetoric and demand for independence? Where does SSA stand today in term of social, political, and economic development? According to Osahon (2010): "The general feeling is that Africa is not moving forward; if anything, it seems to be marking time or stepping backwards from where it stood in 1960. Independence appears not to have been a blessing for Africa, rather, it has resulted in general disillusionment, regression, and hopelessness of its citizens" (p. 1). Ayittey (1987) adds that "a palpable sense of despair, disillusionment, and indignation grips black Africa today. An increasing number of black Africans feel betrayed and outraged at Africa's execrable economic and political records" (p. 195). A casual perusal of the region today according to Lazarus (1986), shows that independence brought neither peace nor prosperity to Africa; on the contrary, he says, independence brought further fragmentation, weakness, war, and social and ethno-violence in relative abundance (emphasis added).

The critical question then, is: Why is it that more than fifty years after independence, there is a heightened sense of despair, disillusionment, hopelessness, indignation, fragmentation, social and ethno-violence, and above all, absence of social and economic development in the region? Why is it that Sub-Saharan Africa now lags behind other regions (including the formerly poor and economically peripheral countries in both East and South Asia and the semi-peripheral countries of Latin America) on all indices of social and economic development? For example, in 1950, the per capita income of SSA (calculated in 1993 dollar purchasing power parity measures) was $1,095; it was $427 in East Asia, $788 in South Asia and $2,862 in Latin America. But by 2000, the numbers had increased dramatically to $3,946 in East Asia, $1,986 in South Asia, $6,333 in Latin America and only $1,472 in SSA (Sanderson, 2005:195).

Also, in comparing the economic performance of some SSA countries with the Republic of South Korea for example, Doe (1997:105) points out that in 1960, the per capita income of South Korea of $150 was smaller than that of Gabon ($284), Ghana ($198), Senegal ($192) and Cote d'Ivoire ($175). But by 1993 he says, per capita income of South Korea jumped to $7,660 while that of Gabon (the highest in SSA) was $4,960. For Senegal, he says, it was only $750 whereas those of Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana were $630 and $430 respectively (Doe, 1997:108). Doe further points out that the total export of SSA in 1993 (a region of 461 million people with vast natural resources) was only $56 billion whereas that of Singapore (a small country of about 3 million people with no natural resources) was $74 billion (1997:109). So, why is Sub-Saharan Africa regressing while formerly poor, peripheral, and semi-peripheral countries in other regions are progressing? This paper argues that the reason Sub-Saharan Africa continues to fall behind on all indices of social and economic development while other regions (including those that were similarly placed five to six decades earlier) have made formidable economic and social progress, is poor governance (failed leadership); the author argues that the most pressing problem preventing SSA from benefiting from today's global economy is poor governance (failed leadership).

Definitions of Governance: Recognizing that most of the crises in developing countries have to do with governance, the World Bank, in 1992 stated that "governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (World Bank, 1992:1). A year later, the World Bank modified its definition somewhat stating that governance is the "method through which power is exercised in the management of a country's political, economic, and social resources for development" (World Bank, 1993). In 1997, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) defined governance as "the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels; governance comprises the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences" (UNDP, 1997a:3). In another discussion paper, UNDP modified her definition stating that "governance is the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs. It is the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations, and mediate their differences" (UNDP, 1997b:9).

Further, in 1999, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) defined governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's social and economic resources for development; governance means the way those with power use that power" (ADB, 1999:3). Kaufmann, Kraay, and Zoido-Lobaton (1999:1) defined governance as:

> *The traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good. This includes (i) the process by which those in authority are selected, monitored, and replaced, (ii) the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies, and (iii) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.*

Canada's Institute of Governance holds that governance rests on three dimensions namely: authority, decision-making, and accountability. It says that "governance determines who has power, who makes decisions, how other players make their voices heard, and how account is rendered" (Canadian Institute On Governance, 2011:1).

From these definitions, four dimensions of governance namely: political, economic, social, and administrative can be discerned. Political governance has to do with how political power is acquired in a country, how such power is exercised, and how and when those who hold such power can be changed. Some have argued that both the acquisition and exercise of political power in SSA is a major impediment to social and economic development in the region because people who seek political offices in the region would do anything to get into such offices and once in office, they want to stay forever (Associated Press, 2016; Chan, Kruhly, & Olivennes, 2016; Sogbaike, 2016; Nwanganga, 2015; Ikejiaku, 2012; Nossiter, 2009). Here are some examples: Omar Bongo of Gabon died in office in 2009 after 42 years as president; General Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo died in office in 2005 after 38 years as president; Felix Houpheuet Boigny of Cote D'Ivoire died in office after 34 years as president; William Tubman of Liberia died in office after 28 years as president; Sekoh Toure of Guinea died in office after 26 years as president; Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and Seretse Khama of Botswana both died in office after 15 years as president; Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Dauda Jawara of Gambia, Lebua Jonathan of Lesotho, Hamani Diori of Niger, and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana were in office for 32, 29, 20, 14, and 10 years respectively before being overthrown in military coups or armed revolts; Kamauzu Banda of Malawi and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia were in office for 29 and 27 years respectively before they were voted out in multi-party elections. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania voluntarily retired after 27 years in office; President Leopold Senghor of Senegal retired after 21 years and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, at 92 years old, is still in office and has even been endorsed as the ruling party's candidate in a national election scheduled for 2018; President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria wanted to change the constitution to enable him stay as president after 8 years. In the opinion of this author, this mentality is a major impediment to both social and economic development in the region.

Economic governance relates to how the resources of a country (both natural resources and loans) are used by those who hold political power. According to Maren (1997), people who seek political offices in SSA are only interested in what they and their supporters can steal while in office in the short run. This attitude induces graft, fraud, embezzlement, corruption, and resource misallocation and unambiguously lowers the wealth of the nation thereby imposing a severe drag on both social and economic development (Rowley, 2000). Social governance relates to the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens communicate with their governments, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences. In SSA, citizens do not have grievance channels or established processes to have their voices heard.

Administrative governance in the other hand, is concerned with the capacity of the government, through its institutions, to effectively formulate and implement sound policies for which the government will be held accountable. Administrative governance is tenuous is SSA particularly because of widespread bribery and corruption. Also, people who hold political offices in SSA are not held accountable for their actions and/or inactions; they enjoy immunity from prosecution for whatever they do or do not do while in office. And if and when they leave office, they use the funds they embezzled while in office to ward-off any attempts to bring them to justice. As the following discussions of the Nigerian and Ghanaian, and to a lesser degree, the Kenyan and Zairean (Congo) experiences show, people who hold political offices in Sub-Saharan Africa fail to recognize and respect these four dimensions of governance and as a result, fail to develop their respective economies and positively impact the lives of their populace.

Nigeria: After Britain abolished her international trade in slaves and enacted legislation prohibiting British subjects from participating in the trade, she established the West African Squadron in an attempt to stop ships of other nations from leaving the African coast with slaves (Wikipedia, 2013a). The meaning of such humanitarian gesture is open to interpretation but it enabled Britain to lay claim to the natural resources in the area and in what later became Nigeria to the exclusion of other nations; the promotion of anti-slave trade and British trading interests were key aspects of the British rhetoric of "protectorate" that led to the colonization and exploitation of what later became Nigeria (Pakenham, 2003). British claim to a West African sphere of influence (including what later became Nigeria) received international recognition at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 during which European powers partitioned Africa by allotting areas of exploitation (Rosenberg, 2016). The following year, the Royal Niger Company was chartered and granted broad concessionary powers in "all the territory of the basin of the Niger" under the leadership of Sir George Goldie (Pakenham, 2003:254).

Although Goldie managed to deprive France and Germany of access to the area, the Royal Niger Company was not deemed to be a sufficient instrument of British imperialism. Consequently, on December 31, 1899, Britain terminated the charter of the company and the job of hastening the pace of British control of the area was transferred to an army officer named Frederick Lugard. During his six-year tenure as high commissioner, Lugard transformed the commercial sphere of influence he inherited from the Royal Niger Company into a viable economic territory under effective British political control; Nigeria became a British "protectorate" after resisting areas were either defeated or completely destroyed (Google Arts & Culture, 2014). To govern the area, Lugard adopted the policy of indirect rule-a system in which native rulers/chiefs continued to rule their traditional lands and peoples as long as they collected taxes and performed other duties ensuring British prosperity (Library of Congress, 2001). The indirect rule system operated relatively smoothly in the northern protectorate where the Fulani aristocracy who had long governed the Sokoto caliphate was able to administer traditional Islamic law alongside British civil law. In the southern protectorate, the British retained the boundaries of traditional kingdoms in Yoruba land but increased the powers of some chiefs at the expense of others and as a result, disrupted historical checks and balances (Atanda, 1979). Within the southeast, the indirect rule system had limited success partly because Igbo traditions favored egalitarian principles (Afigbo, 1979).

Efforts to unify the southern and northern protectorates intensified in 1912 when Frederick Lugard was brought back to the area as governor of both northern and southern Nigeria. This goal was achieved in 1914 when Lugard amalgamated northern and southern Nigeria and from then onward, the entire region became the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria presided over by a proconsul, entitled the Governor-General of Nigeria (James, 2004). The rival claims of Nigeria's various regions and demands for self-government and independence intensified after the Second World War. By 1951, the country had been divided into Northern, Eastern, and Western regions, each with its own house of assembly along with a separate house of chiefs for the Northern region to reflect the strong tradition of tribal authority in the north (Wikipedia, 2016). In 1957, the Western and Eastern Regions became formally self-governing under the parliamentary system; the Northern Region acquired similar status in 1959 and on October 1, 1960 (after sixty years of colonial administration), Nigeria became an independent country (James, 2004).

The results of the 1959 general elections showed that no single political party in the country qualified as a national party. So, the government that inherited power at independence in 1960 was a coalition of two parties: the Nigerian People's Congress (NPC), a party dominated by the Hausas and Fulanis in the Northern Region and people of Islamic faith and the Igbo and Christian-dominated National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in the Eastern Region led by Nnamdi Azikiwe. The Action Group (AG), largely dominated by the Yorubas in the Western Region, led by Obafemi Awolowo formed the opposition (Olumide and Ekanade, 2011).

With a federal constitution that guaranteed a large measure of autonomy to the three regions: the Northern, Eastern, and Western Regions; a parliamentary democracy that emphasized majority rule; a constitution that included an elaborate bill of rights to protect minority ethnic groups; and unlike other African countries that adopted a one-party system, Nigeria had a functional multi-party system and therefore, was seen as a beacon of hope for democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ogbeidi, 2012).

As can be seen, at independence Nigeria had all the features of a democratic state and was looked at with admiration and regarded by many as a model democracy in the continent. But soon after independence, lack of tolerance among politicians; unwillingness of the political class to abide by the rule of law; fallout over the sharing of federal portfolios among members of the coalition government; weak federal structure with strong regionalism; worsening regional relations; fallout over the locations of federally sponsored projects in the Second National Development Plan (1962-1968); disparate claims in the sizes and populations of the three regions; three regionally-based and tribally sustained political parties; a political class driven by ethnic ideologies and economic self-interest; fraudulent accounting system; systematic corruption in the appointment and promotion of staff; and systematic corruption in the awarding of contracts all combined to bring about political instability that engulfed the country and led to the first military coup on January 15th, 1966 (Makinde, 2012; Olumide and Ekanade, 2011; Post, 1962; Okonkwo, 2007).

The military government of General Aguiyi Ironsi instituted commissions of inquiry to investigate the activities of politicians and government parastatals. The commissions discovered widespread corruption, many instances of misappropriation of funds, and wanton disregard of laid down procedures in the award of contracts by the first republic politicians. According to Ogbeidi (2012:6):

> *The First Republic ……. was marked by widespread corruption. Government officials looted public funds with impunity. Federal Representatives and Ministers flaunted their wealth with reckless abandon. In fact, it appeared there were no men of good character in the political leadership of the First Republic. Politically, the thinking of the First Republic Nigerian leadership class was based on politics for material gain; making money and living well.*

Six months after the first coup, a counter-coup which brought Lt. Colonel Yakubu Gowon to power was executed. The coup plotters released the politicians being held in detention for corruption. Ethnic tension and violence increased around the country especially, against people from the eastern region. The declaration of an independent state (the Republic of Biafra) by the Eastern Region in May 1967 under the leadership of Lt. Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu led to the Nigerian Civil War-July 1967 to January, 1970 (Wikipedia, 2013a).

The looting of public funds acquired new dimensions under Gowon's administration as a result of an unprecedented wealth from the oil boom of the 1970s. Thus, in July 1975, the Gowon administration was toppled by General Murtala Mohammed who, in an effort to show the essence of leadership and to curtail corruption, declared his assets, asked all government officials to do the same, and instituted series of probes of former leaders (Makinde, 2012). General Murtala Mohammed was assassinated after only six months in office and was succeeded by his Chief of Staff, General Olusegun Obasanjo. Although Obasanjo did not share the same zeal in exposing and prosecuting public officials who looted the wealth of the country as his boss, he ensured that the reins of government was transferred to civilians in 1979 (Ogbeidi, 2012).

During what is referred to as the Second Republic (1979-1983) under President Shehu Shagari, Nigerians witnessed a resurgence of spectacular level of corruption at all levels of government; elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels of government looted public funds with reckless abandon. The government of Shagari was toppled on December 31st, 1983 by General Muhammadu Buhari who promised to halt corruption and restore discipline, integrity, and dignity to public life. But as the regime started arresting state governors and commissioners on grounds of corruption and setting up special tribunals of inquiry to investigate their activities, the Buhari government was toppled by General Ibrahim Babangida in August 1985 (Okonkwo, 2007). During General Babangida's regime, there was no serious attempt to stop corruption; instead, corruption reached an alarming rate and became institutionalized. Even, leaders found guilty of corruption by tribunals under the Murtala Mohammed and Muhammadu Buhari regimes were released from detention and their seized properties returned to them; some of them even found their way back to public life (Ogbeidi, 2012).

General Babangida reluctantly handed over power to a non-elected civilian-military Interim National Government headed by Ernest Shonekan in August 1993 (that is, after 8 years of brutal dictatorship). Within three months, the Interim National Government was ousted from power by the military under the leadership of General Sani Abacha. Under Abacha, the looting of public funds continued blatantly and systematically for the next five years. After Abacha died of heart attack in 1998, he was replaced by General Abdulsalami Abubakar. General Abubakar adopted a new constitution which provided for multi-party elections and on May 29 1999, he handed over the reins of government to Olusegun Obasanjo-the winner of a general election that was concluded earlier in the month (Wikipedia, 2013a). After eight years in office and a failed attempt to amend the constitution to enable him serve a third term as president, Obasanjo handed over power to Umaru Yar'Adua, the winner of the 2007 general elections. Yar'Adua died in office in 2010 and his vice president, Goodluck Jonathan, was sworn in as his replacement. Goodluck Jonathan handed over power to Muhammedu Buhari-the winner of the general election of 2015.

Leadership Crisis and Corruption in Nigeria:

As mentioned earlier, when Nigeria got her independence from Britain in 1960, it had all the trappings of a model democracy. But soon after the indigenous politicians inherited the reins of power, things deteriorated at unimaginable speed because those who inherited power from Britain were more interested in the acquisition of personal wealth and fame than in the welfare and development of the new nation and its people. A brief summary of the level of corruption found in the various regimes in Nigeria since independence will help shade more light on the leadership crisis facing the country. To begin with, Nigerians in various positions of authority within the colonial administration engaged in various acts of graft, fraud, bribery, and corruption because to them (as is the case with the average Nigerian), "public service" provides an opportunity for self-enrichment. Consequently, as early as 1947, commissions of inquiry set up by the colonial administration to investigate incidents of corruption involving Nigerians found that there was 'systematic corruption' in the appointment and promotion of staff, bribes being demanded for unnecessary appointments, contracts not awarded to lowest bidders, contractors routinely asked to pay ten percent of the value of the contract as bribe, etc. (Okonkwo, 2007).

Further, in 1956, the Foster-Sutton Tribunal investigated Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Premier of the Eastern Region and found that he had engaged in a number of illegal activities and corrupt practices for self-enrichment. In 1962, the Coker Commission found Obafemi Awolowo, the first premier of the Western Region, guilty of corruption. According to Okonkwo (2007:2):

> *The first republic, with Zik as the president, was marked by widespread corruption. Government officials looted public funds with impunity. Federal Representative and Minister of Aviation, K.O. Mbadiwe, flaunted his wealth by building a palace in his hometown. When asked where he had gotten the money to build such a mansion, K.O. replied, "From sources known and unknown".*

The bloody military coup of January 15, 1966 that brought General Aguiyi Ironsi to power was a direct response to the corruption of the politicians of the first republic. The assassinations of the Minister of Finance Festus Okotie-Eboh, who was notorious for flaunting his ill-gotten wealth, Premier of the Western Region, Samuel Akintola, nicknamed "rigging" and Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of the Northern Region "whose wardrobe was the most elaborate in the world," were applauded by the general public (Okonkwo, 2007). Following the coup, the Ironsi government instituted a series of commissions of inquiry to look into the activities of a number of government parastatals including the Nigeria Railway Corporation, the Electric Corporation of Nigeria, the Nigeria Airways, and the Nigeria Ports Authority. The investigations revealed that a number of ministers, including Okotie-Eboh, Ribadu, Njoku and others formed companies and used their influence to secure contracts. The investigations also revealed that family members of those in power were allowed to fly free of charge on Nigeria Airways, that improper hiring practices were common, and that government payrolls were rift with "ghost workers" (Ogbeidi, 2012). It was also discovered that in building the Railway Medical Center which was estimated to cost 75,000 pounds, Dr. Ikejiani (the chairman of the Nigeria Railway Corporation) inflated the cost to 440,000 pounds and diverted the excess to his personal use (Okonkwo, 2007:3). According to Okonkwo, Dr. Ikejiani was in debt before he became the chairman of the corporation but by the time he left office, he owned a fleet of cars and buildings. He was found guilty of misallocation of funds.

The zeal to punish the wrongdoers of the first republic died with the Gowon coup of July 1966; the politicians in detention for corruption were released by the regime and their seized properties returned to them.

The implicit message in such action was clear; it became clear that one could steal public funds as long as the loot is shared with people in the right places. As would be expected, incidence of corruption during the Gowon regime soared. The General Murtala Mohammed coup of 1975 was an attempt to end corruption. To show his commitment to this course, General Mohammed declared his assets, asked all government officials to follow suit, and instituted series of probes of past leaders. The Federal Assets Investigation Panel General Mohammed instituted in 1975 found ten of the twelve state governors in the Gowon regime guilty of corruption. Those involved were dismissed from the military with ignominy and forced to forfeit all properties considered to be in excess of their earnings (Ogbeidi, 2012). Furthermore, the Belgore Commission of Inquiry investigating contract to supply cement on behalf of the Ministry of Defense found that whereas only 2.9 million tons of cement was actually ordered for the ministry at a cost of N52 million, the paper work falsely showed that 16 million tons of cement was used at a cost of N557 million. Invariably, those in charge of this order pocketed N505 million. Similar commissions of inquiry constituted by the new military government resulted in the dismissal of several corrupt officials many of who were ordered to return the money they had stolen (Okonkwo, 2007).

General Murtala Mohammed was assassinated after only two hundred days in office and was succeeded by Olusegun Obasanjo who did not show the same zeal in the prosecution of wrongdoers but returned the country to civilian rule in 1979. The Shehu Shagari regime saw a resurgence of high levels of corruption and the looting of public funds. It is estimated that during Shagari's presidency (1979-1983), government officials stole over $16 billion in oil revenues and whenever audits of government accounts were ordered, federal offices would mysteriously go up in flames, making it impossible to discover any evidence of embezzlement or fraud (Ogbeidi, 2012). The Shagari regime was ousted in December 1983 by General Mohammadu Buhari. General Buhari arrested several state governors, commissioners, and other government officials suspected of engaging in fraud, embezzlement, and corruption, froze their accounts, and brought them before tribunals of inquiry.

In less than two years, General Ibrahim Babangida, who was obviously opposed to the reformist agenda of the General Buhari regime, over-threw the Buhari government. According to Ogbeidi (2012), the corrupt nature and financial recklessness of the Babangida regime was detailed in the un-published Okigbo Panel Report of 1994 which indicted General Babangida and the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Alhaji Abdulkadir Ahmed for mismanaging about $12.4 billion of oil revenue. In the case of General Abacha, it is estimated that he and his family embezzled more than $4 billion during his time in office (Ogbeidi, p. 8). Not only that, the Babangida and Abacha regimes made no real attempts to stop the looting of public funds; instead, leaders found guilty of fraud and corruption under the Buhari regime found their way back to public life. Worse still, their ill-gotten property which was seized by the Buhari regime was returned to them. The return to civilian government in 1999 did not end corruption; instead, it became more widespread and took place with impunity throughout the eight years of the Olusegun Obasanjo presidency. From the office of the presidency and the House of Representatives and the Senate to the offices of the state governors and local governments, the looting of the country's oil wealth continued unabated, the rhetoric of President Obasanjo and the number of commissions of inquiry he established notwithstanding; Obasanjo's words did not match his actions.

For example, during the launching of the Obasanjo Presidential Library in Abeokuta, Ogun State in 2005, President Obasanjo used his position to extort billions of Naira from various sources claiming that the "donations" were voluntary and came from personal savings or from the donors' salaries (Ikejiaku, 2012). But, questions remain whether the 100 million Naira pledged by Governor Gbenga Daniel of Ogun State came from the governor's own savings or was it taken from the state budget? Questions also remain whether the 10 million Naira from each state governor that was pledged by Gov. Victor Attah (the then Chairman of the Governors' Forum) came from the governors' salaries or was the money taken from the budget of each state? Also questionable is the fact that both Obasanjo and his vice president Atiku Abubakar obtained licenses to run private businesses while in office (raising conflict of interest issues) and the fact that a previously unknown company called "Obasanjo Holdings" donated 100 million Naira toward the Obasanjo Presidential Library. Not only that, the fact remains that some banks were compelled to donate toward the project (Ikejiaku, p. 6). Furthermore, during the Obasanjo presidency some government officials including state governors were arrested overseas for money laundering and other acts of criminality; some even had extensive criminal record including serving prison terms (Walker, 2012).

Furthermore, of the fourteen Nigerians that ruled the country from 1960-2015, Goodluck Jonathan's government is often described by critics as the weakest, the most corrupt, and the most visionless administration the country has ever known (Ahamefule, 2012).

This characterization could result from the controversial circumstances under which Jonathan emerged as president in 2010 and/or from the various allegations of high levels of bribery and corruption leveled against him and most of his lieutenants (Nduka, 2017). Additionally, a federal high court in Lagos recently (late 2016) ordered the freezing of multiple bank accounts belonging to Jonathan's wife, Patience Jonathan and one Esther Oba, over allegations of graft, corruption, and fraud. According to Vanguard newspapers (as in Ikeji, 2016), the affidavit was filed before the court by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) prosecutor, Rotimi Oyedepo, requesting the court to urgently direct the managers of the six banks where the funds are to prevent further tampering with the fourteen accounts where Mrs. Jonathan and her partner Ms. Oba are hiding close to 8 trillion Naira (Ikeji, 2016). Not only that, Italian prosecutors have recently named former President Goodluck Jonathan as part of a $1.3 billion bribery probe involving oil giants ENI and Shell (Nduka, 2017).

Ghana: Ghanaians gave Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) a landslide victory in Ghana's first general election in 1951 even though he was in prison serving a three-year sentence for organizing a strike in 1950. As a result of this victory, he was asked to form a government and in 1952, he became the first prime minister of Ghana (Wikipedia, 2013b). Upon independence in 1957, Prime Minister Nkrumah became increasingly authoritarian moving swiftly to consolidate his political base first by showing his opposition to industrial democracy with his Trade Union Act passed in 1958 (which made strikes illegal) and then with the passage of the Preventive Detention Act which made it possible for his administration to arrest, detain, and imprison (without due process of the law) all those who did not agree with his views or people he viewed as political opponents or rivals (Rowley, 2000; Nelson and Gyamerah, 2009). Nkrumah used both laws to systematically decimate the scattered and ineffective political opposition by members of the United Party (UP) by putting its leaders in prison without trial; the only legal recourse for people he arrested and prisoned was personal appeal to Nkrumah himself. It has even been suggested that some of his associates used these laws to arrest innocent people in order to acquire their political offices and/or their business assets (Annor, 2009). Nkrumah also unleased his assault on traditional chiefs he suspected of supporting his opponents by deposing some of them while others went into self-exile. Even, his close advisors could not question any of his decisions or policies. For example, when Komla Gbedemah questioned his lack of financial discipline in 1961, he was dismissed from the government immediately. Consequently, other close advisors became reluctant to question any of his policies for fear that they might be seen as opponents or political enemies (Annor, 2009:6).

Nkrumah became paranoid and more brutal following an assassination attempt in 1962. After he recovered from the minor injuries he sustained during the attack, he had about 500 people (including some members of his own party) arrested and detained indefinitely (Boasiako, 2010). The special court he set up to try the suspects found some guilty and sentenced them to prison terms while others were acquitted for lack of evidence. Unsatisfied with the outcome, President Nkrumah called on the National Assembly to hold a special session to pass a law that would empower him to set aside the decision of the Special Court. The National Assembly consequently passed the Law of Criminal Procedure Act amendment to the constitution which declared the judgment of the Special Court null and void. New judges were appointed to retry those that were acquitted. They were found guilty and sentenced to death but Nkrumah commuted the death sentences (Annor, 2009).

Further, in 1964, Nkrumah proposed two constitutional amendments: one was to make his CPP the only legal political party and himself president for life of both nation and party. This amendment transformed Ghana into a one-party state. The second amendment would empower him to dismiss judges of the High Court at any time for reasons which appear sufficient to him. Both amendments passed. To avoid abuse of their civil and/or human rights, some of Ghana's talents went on self-exile (Boasiako, 2010). Without much opposition, Nkrumah embarked on a redistribution of income from the unorganized small-scale farmers in favor of CPP members and the more effectively organized urban interest groups that constituted his core support base; he instructed the Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB) to keep cocoa prices as low as possible claiming that he wanted to raise funds for development projects (Meredith, 2005). In reality, Nkrumah expanded government bureaucracy and expenditures (he removed the cap the British colonial administration put on government spending), taxed cocoa producers heavily, and embarked on a development strategy that was based on state-led import substitution setting in place the organizational basis for systematic rent extraction by members of CPP (Rowley, 2000).

The CMB was notorious for corruption and mismanagement under Nkrumah as the board was regularly exploited to distribute credit, government contracts, commissions, and jobs to CPP members and their supporters.

Budget deficits caused taxes to be increased even more and exchange controls introduced in July 1961 followed by the introduction of comprehensive import licensing in December 1961 (Watkins, 2009). Whereas Ghana's GDP grew at an average rate of 5% between 1957 and 1961, it decreased to an average of about 2% between 1962 and 1966 while population increased rapidly (Annor, 2009; Anaman, 2006). Nkrumah's administration was so corrupt and reckless that at the time he was deposed in 1966 in a military coup d'etat, he had turned the more than $502 million foreign reserves he inherited on the eve of independence to millions of dollars of foreign debt (Akwah, 2012). Not only that, only 3 or 4 of the 64 state enterprises he had created proved economically viable (Rowley, 2000). An investigation revealed that Nkrumah had over $5 million in his personal account at the time he was deposed from office (Lawson, 2010). The political culture he left behind put Ghana through abusive military regimes.

Kenya: Following the Mau Mau Rebellion in 1952 against British colonial rule and its exploitation of the native population, Jomo Kenyatta (regarded as the leader of the militant group) was arrested, tried, convicted, and jailed. But while on house arrest in 1960 (after being released from prison), he was elected the leader of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and upon release in 1961, he was admitted into the Legislative Council when one African member handed over his seat (Keizan, 2013). When elections were held in May 1963, KANU won 83 of the 124 seats (the opposition party-the Kenya African Democratic Union, KADU got 41 seats) and on June 1, 1963, Jomo Kenyatta became prime minister of the autonomous Kenyan government (Wikipedia, 2016). Once in power, his government refused to implement federalism and by the middle of 1964 Kenyatta and KANU had successfully shut KADU out of the political process. The minority KADU politicians joined KANU thus making Kenya a one-party state with Jomo Kenyatta as the executive president and Daniel Arap Moi as the vice president. Jomo Kenyatta is regarded by many as the father of Kenyan independence (and rightly so) but his administration was marred by harassment of political dissidents, suspicion of link to murders of opposition figures, and corruption especially relating to the acquisition of land intended for settlement of landless Africans; his administration encouraged public officials to use their position, power, and influence to accumulate wealth. His authoritarian style, characterized by patronage, favoritism, tribalism, and nepotism set an example followed by his successors (Wikipedia, 2016:6-7).

Daniel Arap Moi: Upon taking over power in 1978 following Kenyatta's death, Arap Moi released all political prisoners who have been languishing in jails for years but in due course, he became more interested in neutralizing political opponents and those perceived to be against his leadership (Adar and Munyae, 2001). President Moi became more brutal after a failed coup attempt in 1982 (Crawfurd, 2016) and between 1978 and 1989, Moi and members of his regime shifted $5 billion into numbered accounts in foreign banks (Rowley, 2000). For the twenty-four years Moi served as president, he instituted a spoils system that enabled him and his two sons to siphon off billions of dollars of government money and accumulated assets overseas that include multi-million dollar properties in London, New York, South Africa, and Australia (Rice, 2007). The breathtaking extent of corruption perpetrated during the 24 years of Moi's presidency is laid bare in the Kroll report (which the government has refused to make public). According to the report, Moi and his two sons (both of whom are said to worth about $2 billion in 2002) used a web of front men to manage their businesses which include some 50 companies across Kenya, co-ownership of a Belgian bank and many numbered bank accounts in various nations around the world (Wadhams, 2007). According to Rowley, 2000:16:

> *President Moi's personal wealth is estimated to be in excess of US$3 billion. In addition to moving wealth into foreign bank accounts, Moi has developed an economic empire in Kenya, forcing the government to make purchases from his businesses. The escalating greed of the president and his cronies coupled with the repressive regime necessary to extract such wealth is largely responsible for the collapse of the Kenyan economy into a black hole.*

Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly, Zaire): Congo obtained her independence from Belgium in 1960 in an extremely acrimonious atmosphere. The region quickly fell into turmoil as various ethnic groups fought for control over a weak central government and as the Congo became a Cold War battlefield between the United States and the USSR (Collins, 1997). In 1961, the CIA orchestrated a successful plot to assassinate the pro-USSR president, President Patrice Lumumba and replaced him with a Western puppet, Mobutu Sese Seko (Slattery, 2001). Mobutu signaled the change in political direction by renaming the Congo Zaire and imposed decades-long policies of repression upon his people and an extensive network of economic regulations exclusively designed to enrich himself and his cronies entirely ignoring any responsibility for the provision of public goods (Rowley, 2000).

Presiding over an "empire of graft and venality" Mobutu bragged on U.S. national television in 1984 that he was the second richest man in the world with more than US$8 billion in numbered personal accounts which makes the case of Zaire the most egregious example of the misuse of U.S. foreign aid (Moren, 1997). With his U.S. patron no longer interested in protecting him following the end of the Cold War, the physically ailing Mobutu was forced to flee the country as his poorly organized army succumbed to rebel forces led by Laurent Kabila in 1997. Kabila pronounced himself president, renamed the country-Democratic Republic of Congo, arrested all those who opposed his government, and increased government intervention in what little was left of the domestic economy (Talbot, 2001).

Conclusion:

Given the foregoing, one can conclude that people seek political offices in Sub-Saharan Africa because of economic enrichment opportunities that accompany such offices; the politicians are only interested in what they and their supporters can steal while in office in the short run. This practice which started with the first generation of indigenous politicians has now become so blatant and reckless partly due to the fact that people who embezzle public funds in the region are never held accountable for their actions; the so-called "commissions of inquiry" subsequent regimes set up are only smokescreens used by the politicians to appease the international community that demand for action to curb corruption (Okekeocha, 2013). Even when such commissions uncover wrongdoings and reflect such in their report, the sitting government will never make such reports public (Ogbeidi, 2012; Wadhams, 2007). Not only that, if a committed leader comes to power and begins to hold people accountable for their actions while in office, such a leader will be assassinated as was the case with Murtala Mohammed in Nigeria. Also, if a corrective regime puts corrupt leaders in jail and/or confiscates their ill-gotten wealth, such a regime will be ousted as soon as possible and the corrupt politicians in jail are released and their seized assets returned to them (as was the case in Nigeria). People who speak out in one way or another against these occurrences are tagged "political enemies" and are harassed or even assassinated by "unknown gunmen." And, the "investigations" will never yield any evidence. These practices combine to stall social and economic development in the region.

Further, the mentality of the leadership class in SSA is to remain in power as long as they are alive; the region is home to the longest sitting executive president as well as the oldest sitting executive president in the world. Also, it is only in SSA that a sitting president will brag about how rich he is on live television while the vast majority of his people are poor, uneducated, unemployed, and have much shorter life expectancy compared to people in other parts of the world. In as much as there is nothing wrong in being rich and perhaps choosing to let the world know that one is rich, let's not forget that leaders in the Western world make money and then get into public service whereas leaders in SSA get into public service simply to convert public funds into private wealth. People in SSA generally see "public service" as an opportunity to amass personal wealth; those who go in to do honest work are mocked and ridiculed. This mentality must change as it partly explains why 60% to 70% of the citizens of the region live on $1 a day in spite of vast natural resources (World Bank, 2017). Let us also remember that leaders in developed societies surround themselves with people who have expertise and/or experiential knowledge in various areas of public service; people are appointed (subject to legislative confirmation) into areas in which they will serve society better. This is not the case in SSA.

The case of Botswana whose poverty rate declined from 50% at independence in 1960 to just over 19% today (World Bank, 2016b) proves that there is nothing in the African DNA that makes it impossible for the economies of the nations in SSA to grow at the same rate as those of the East Asian countries (Lehmann, 2009). As mentioned earlier, the biggest impediment to social and economic growth in the region is poor governance; the most important element that has eluded the region is honest and committed leadership as Achebe, (1985:3) makes clear below in the case of Nigeria:

> *The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership. We have lost the twentieth century; are we bent on seeing that our children also lose the twenty-first? God forbid!*

Suggestions: Here are some of the things that can be done to improve governance in the region and help boost social and economic development: **1**. **Supremacy of the rule of law and accountability:** People in all public offices in the region (local, state, or federal including the president) must be answerable to the law; no one should be above the law.

And, all holders of public office must be held accountable for their actions and those guilty of bribery, fraud, graft, embezzlement, corruption or any type of malfeasance must be punished accordingly. **2**. **Asset declaration:** All politicians must declare their assets before being sworn into office and must be audited at the end of their term(s) in office. People who hold positions that involve handling budgets must declare their assets before taking office and must be audited yearly. **3**. **Background checks:** Detailed background checks must be conducted on people seeking political offices or civil service employment. Those with questionable characters must not be put in sensitive positions whereas those with criminal records must be disqualified. **4**. **Yearly audits of government offices and government parastatals:** Government offices (federal, state, local) and government parastatals must be audited yearly. **5**. **Government bank accounts:** All states and all local governments can only maintain one bank account and such account must be held with the country's national bank and all transactions must be through such bank account. **6**. **Government contracts:** All government contracts (federal, state, local) must be published in advance by one federal, state, or local government office. After the contract has been awarded, the names of all bidders along with their respective bids and the name(s) of the winning contractor(s) must be maintained and subject to audit and/or public scrutiny. **7**. **Monitor commercial banks:** Each nation's national bank must develop strict rules that would govern both the establishment and operation of commercial banks and must closely monitor the activities of such banks. **8**. **Confirmation of names on government payroll:** A list of the names of people on government payroll along with their qualifications and responsibilities must be maintained by each government office and there must be periodic verification of such list to ensure accuracy. **9**. **Adequate vetting of people running for public offices:** People running for political offices must be properly vetted; those that have criminal records and those that have been charged and/or convicted of bribery, graft, fraud, embezzlement, and/or corruption must be disqualified. **10**. **Constitutional limits on terms of office must be honored:** All elective political office holders must be limited to the term of office specified in the constitution. **11**. **No immunity from prosecution:** Countries whose constitutions include clauses that grant immunity to any political office holders must remove such clauses; no office holders should enjoy immunity from prosecution. In the opinion of this author, these are some of the reasons why the region is regressing.

It makes no sense to embezzle the money meant to fund educational institutions and turn around and send one's children and members of one's family to schools overseas; it does not make sense to embezzle money budgeted for medical research and to fund hospitals and have to travel to other countries for mere yearly medical check-ups; it makes no sense to share money budgeted for the military and live under the constant fear of terrorism and violent crimes; it makes no sense to embezzle money meant for the police force and expect the officers to maintain law and order and fight crime; it makes no sense to be boosting the economies of other countries with stolen public funds while the economies of the countries in SSA are the worst in the world; it makes no sense to use money meant for infrastructure in the region to buy multi-million dollar mansions overseas and fleets of high tech vehicles when hunger and disease are major threats in the region. The urgency in understanding the consequences of these practices and changing them was stressed in 1996 by the *Ghana Drum* (as in Ayittey, 2002:4):

> *Many a time we have wondered if the so-called African leaders sometimes lack the capacity to think and understand the ramifications of their actions. After all the bloodshed in Rwanda you would think we have learnt a lesson but no! Idiocy of our power-hungry leaders seems to triumph over pragmatism and common sense. The rationale for the current fighting defies any logic. The world must be getting tired of us, given our self-inflicted tragedies galore. We seem to lack any sense of urgency to handle problems in an expedient manner devoid of bloodshed. Lord Have Mercy!*

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