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 MATERIALISM AND SOCIAL CLASS: THE BANE OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIAS' GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES
 

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### Abstract

*Universally, social class is mostly enhanced by your origin and achievement, but individual society in the act of proving their extent of sanity and sincerity especially in ensuring the prominence of social values specify the act and manner of acquiring the lots and properties. The ability of the social institutions to uphold ethical values dictates citizen's conformity with rules and regulations which negates corruption. The achievement of these values confirms the political maturity, economic buoyancy and technological breakthrough of the western world. The objective of this paper is that class promotion and perpetration of hegemonic qualities over the citizens is the major reason why our leaders engage in corruption. It established that far from being altruistic, Nigerian leaders are egocentric characterized by massive embezzlements and misappropriation of public funds. The collaboration of the judiciary with other arms corroborates the egocentrism. The paper concludes that until the rule of law prevails over all citizens irrespective of class, which characterizes strict enforcement of the rule of law, our law makers will never cease from being the law breakers which is the irony of the Nigerian political class.*

Keywords: social class, corruption, values, leaders, citizens.

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### Introduction

The basis for the placement of values on materials by people hangs on the belief in the capability of promoting human status in the society. Naturally, human beings are domineering and would always want to stabilize their status so as to achieve their aim and objectives. The instinct of class is the urge that promotes the tendency for the acquisition of materials which distinguish personalities in human societies. Personality according to Mahmud (2009) refers to behavior which though not necessarily right or wrong is pleasing or offensive to other people, favourable or unfavourable to the individual's standing with his fellows. Psychologically speaking, personality is the sum total that an individual is, of everything that constitutes a person's physical, mental, emotional and temperamental make up. Our experience, memories, knowledge, day dream study, learning habits, thoughts, attitudes and believe sentiments, goals and ideals, enthusiasm and ambitions. Life principle and conduct all constitute

our personality. The missing link between our leaders' personality and leadership styles, that is "sincerity of purpose" which brought about the promotion of class and hegemony cum corruption is the major discuss of this paper.

### Conceptual and Theoretical Clarification

Materialism is the belief that money, possessions and physical comforts are more important than spiritual values in life. It is the belief that only material things exist (Hornby, 2010). Weber in Henslin (2008) defined social class as a large group of people who rank closely to one another in property, prestige and power. These three elements separate people into different lifestyles, give them different chances in life and provide them with distinct ways of looking at the self and the world. The term "class" originally referred to property divisions in Roman times and implied an inherited social position. The modern use of 'class' is linked to the industrial revolution and modern capitalism (late eighteenth century). Industrialization



brought with it new classes based on achievement, and transformed the class structure from its ascribed roots based on privilege of birth. Equally, the term stratification borrowed from geology is identified as layers in rock formation. Social stratification means the social ordering of different groups, one above the other into different layers or strata. The hierarchical social system is dependent on unequal social factors between the groups, such as power, wealth and status (Best, Griffiths & Hope, 2001).

Corruption as defined by Ackerman (1999) is the misuse of public power for private gain and basically epitomizes a symptom that something has gone wrong in the management of the state. State institutions designed to govern the state are contrarily used and manipulated for personal enrichment and the provision of benefits to the corrupt. The notion of corruption as the abuse of public power for private gain as specified by Okeshola (2012) could be seen as a conflict between the obligation to exercise a public power on the public interest and self interest of an individual to use or exploit them for private gain. Corruption in continuation of Okeshola's argument is widespread in developing countries not because the people are different from people from other parts of the world but because the conditions are ripe for it. There are many reasons why this is so. The motivation to earn income from among the populace in developing countries is relatively stronger, exacerbated by poverty, unemployment and low wages. In Nigeria, accountability is generally weak. Political competition and civil liberties are often restricted. Laws and principles of ethics in government are poorly developed and the legal instrument charged with enforcing them are ill-prepared (Shehu, 2006).

This paper adopts the exchange theory as implied by George Homans (1950) and Peter Blau (1964) in Ritzer (2000). Homans's basic view was that the heart of sociology lies in the study of individual behavior and interaction. His main interest was rather in the reinforcement patterns, the history of rewards and costs that lead people to do what they do. Basically, Homans argued that people continue to do what they have found to be rewarding in the past. Conversely, they cease doing what proved to be costly in the past. In order to understand behavior, we need to understand an individual's history of rewards and costs. As the name suggests exchange theory is concerned not only with individual behavior but also with interaction between people involving

an exchange of rewards and costs. The premise is that interactions are likely to continue when there is an exchange of rewards. Conversely, interactions that are costly to one or both parties are much less likely to continue. Writing on exchange and power in social life, Blau (1964) basically adopted Homans perspective, but there was an important difference. Whereas Homans was content to deal mainly with elementary forms of behavior, Blau wanted to integrate this with exchange at the structural and cultural levels, beginning with exchange among actors, but quickly moving on to the larger structures that emerge out of this exchange.

In relevance with social exchange theory which argues that an offer of a benefit generates an obligation to reciprocate in kind. Nigeria politicians cum leaders place great emphasis on interaction and historical antecedents of costing people's character politically which appears to be very rewarding (Ritzer, 2000 & Rogelberg, 2007). Because of the high rewarding system, politics enjoy influx of converts ready to exchange their personality, idiosyncrasy, profession, wealth, ideology and whole lots more for what it offers, hence their materialistic build up and class promotion at the expense of the electorates. Exchange theory is not only concern with individual behavior, but also with interaction between people involving an exchange of rewards and costs. That is why political leaders interact with notable figures in the society which include traditional rulers, community leaders, opinion leaders, human right activist among others, and they in turn on the collection of rewards disseminate and delegate the interaction and or rewards. The rewards are not necessarily monetary all the time, in many cases job offers and appointments. Blau (Ibid) specified exchange at structural and cultural levels such as what obtains at the national assembly committee appointments equally fits into such structural and cultural levels rewards benefitted.

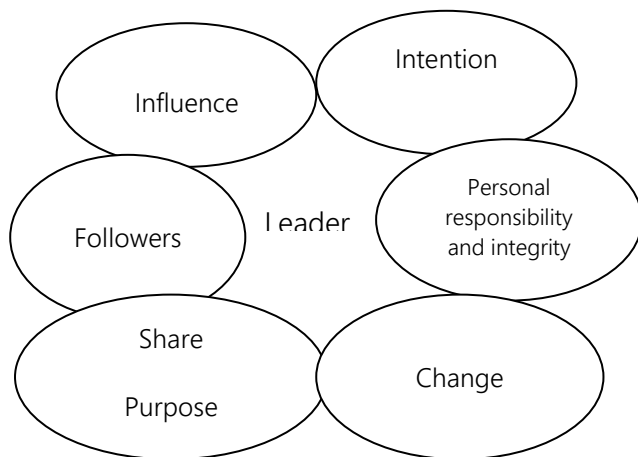
#### Class and Materialistic Consciousness of Nigerian Leaders: A Negation of Altruism

Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth. It is defined by daft (2011) as an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect their shared purposes. He equally views leadership as a people activity that is distinct from administrative paper work on planning activities. It happens among people as against something done to people. An important aspect of



leadership is influencing others to come together around a common vision. Thus, leadership involves the influence of people to bring about change towards a desirable future.

Diagram 1



Source: Daft, R.L.: *Leadership* (2011).

Diagram 1 above summarizes the key elements in the definition of leadership. Leadership involves influence. It occurs among people, those people intentionally desire significant changes and the changes reflect purpose shared by leaders and followers. Influence means that the relationship among people is not passive; however, also inherent in the definition is the concept that influence is multidirectional and non coercive.

In the leading process, certain attributes are accrued to leaders which include power, authority and legitimacy as specified by Dare and Oyewole (2002) who defined power as the ability to make others act the way you wanted them to do, though they might have wanted to act differently. Authority for them is a form of power based on the recognition that the person exercising the power has the right to do so. Legitimacy means lawfully begotten. It is a concept in political science which indicates that the occupant of a political position is doing in accordance with the rules and regulations of the society. A critical look at these attributes revealed they actually complement leaders. Considering the fact that electorates having given leaders their mandate bestow the attributes on leaders and expect much from them which these

attributes make to be cinch. However, events within Nigeria social administration reveals that with the power, authority and legitimacy accorded the leaders, they uphold egocentric issues at the expense of the needs and demands of the citizens. The major reason for Nigeria leader's egocentrism is class promotion which can best be enhanced through amassing wealth via government or public treasury. In reality, Jakopovich (2014) argued that class relation and class locations most often crucially determines both individual life chances and the functioning of social institutions. This goes in line with the determination of class values which individual society does. For most of the ideal societies of the world that abounds in Europe, America and the stable developing countries of Asia (Asian Tigers), the premise of their class value determination is knowledge and achievement, while that of Nigeria is ignorance and celebration quoted with glittering particles tagged knowledge. Once you have successfully located the political class, your chances of succeeding are very high because you have aligned with the class that drives social institutions.

With respect to consumption symbolism, one important implication of the proposed social constructionist perspective on material possessions as symbols of identity is that the identity of other is visible in objectified form as well as one's own. This leads to the proposition that place and evaluate others in a social context, in which possessions form an important part. First impressions formed about others are his influenced by the material objects they own (Burroughs, Draws & Hallman, 1991). Possession based inferences about others according to Dittmar (1991), Dittmar et al (1991) appears to involve in the first place categorical judgments about social identity (e.g. social class, lifestyle, occupation), which in turn give rise to self expressive evaluations about personal identity (individual qualities and values). Conceptual analysis of materialism identified the evaluation of one's own and others' success and wellbeing by the number and quality material possessions owned as one of its central themes (Fournier & Richins 1991; Richins, 1991). The impact of material goods on first impressions could therefore be seen as a facet of materialism at the level of social perception.

Considering the above postulations, the Nigerian leaders engage in different corrupt acts to support and sustain their social class. In the quest of locating their social class cum the augmentation and acquisition of materials, they ensure electoral victory



at all costs which brought about state fragility as argued by Albert (2011). In the same vein, Goldstone and Ulfeider (2004) equally observed that a state is fragile when one or more groups are, or alleged to be systematically excluded from political access, or political office, or full citizenship or when one group (elite faction, ethnic group or subgroup, or family or cronies of political leaders) is corruptly dominating the economy for private advantages. Albert (2010) argued further that the present-day fragility of the Nigerian state is marked by several structural problems-north-south "dichotomy", violent ethnic and religious conflicts, the Niger Delta Crisis, Corruption (high wages for political office holders and money laundering), political identity fragmentation, weak national institutions and inability to organize a free and fair election. the fragility is often revealed most during elections when incumbent power holder use all at their disposal/(including rigging, killing oppositions) to ensure they retain power so as to amass as much wealth as possible from the state.

Informed by experience, one could see vividly that Nigeria is degenerating in productive governmental affairs. The ills of society cum lack of basic things that animate and make life smooth is suggestive of the fact that our leaders have proven themselves incapacitated in leadership capability due to exhibition of monumental corrupt acts (Edema, 2014). The history of Nigeria as narrated by Fagbadebo (2007) is tainted with the absence of good moral and ethical values in the conduct of the ruling elites. The focus of Nigerian leaders is parochial with overriding consideration for personal survival rather than national development. This has adversely affected economic growth. Corruption is not a recent phenomenon that pervades the Nigerian state. Since the creation of modern public administration in the country, there have been cases of official misuse of resources for personal enrichment. Some scholars have argued that the rise of public administration and the discovery of petroleum and natural gas in post colonial Nigeria are two major events that have led to a litany of ignoble corrupt practices in the country. Over the years, the country has seen its wealth withered with little to show in living conditions of the average human being (Adesote & Abimbola, 2012).

Leadership corruption has been one of the greatest concerns to all observers of the country's socio-political and economic development. The menace of

corruption by Nigerian leaders has certainly emerged as one of the main impediment to citizen welfare and national development. Corruption by Nigerian leaders has caused the country severe losses economically, politically and socially, and these facts are responsible for decayed infrastructure, downturn of the economy, fragile political institution, and steady decline in all indicators of national development because of their egocentric class promotion (Anazodo, Okoye & Ezenwile, 2012). Research had shown that the prevalence of corrupt leaders in Nigeria has adversely affected the quality of life, living standard and national psyche (Ijewereme & Dunmade, 2014 & Ogbeidi, 2012). To the leaders the national objective is very secondary; more considerations are given to self than the interest of the society without minding the disruptive impact.

Nigeria leaders consciousness for amassing wealth through public treasury dates back to the first republic in which various allegations of electoral fraud, embezzlement of public fund were levied against the leaders (Tignor, 1993). During the second republic (1979-1983) under the leadership of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the first executive president of Nigeria there were numerous allegations of financial corrupt practices leveled against the government by the military government that overthrew it in December, 1983 (Suberu, 1990). A number of financial corrupt practices were carried out in the executive arm of government in the country since 1999. The perpetration of financial corruption by the executive arm of government involved embezzlements, mismanagements and misappropriation of fund, diversion of fund, award and inflation of contracts, e.t.c. For example, at the state government level, a number of ex governors who ruled between 1999 and 2007 were alleged by EFCC for financial impropriety when they were in government within those years. Among them are lucky Igbinedion of Edo State, Ayo Fayose of Ekiti State, Peter Odili of Rivers State, Chinaroke Nnamani of Enugu state, Saminu Turaki of Jigawa state, Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia, James Ibori, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha of Bayelsa State and Rev. jolly Nyame of Taraba State. For instance, James Ibori was arraigned on a 170-count charge of money laundering of over ₦9.1 billion (Kofarmatta, 2005). Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia was arraigned on a 191- count charge of money laundering, criminal diversion of public fund, official corruption totaling ₦5.2 billion



and was accused of using his loot of ₦3.1 billion to fund Slok Airline and two banks in the Gambia and Sierra Leone in Addition to owing Houses in London And the U.S.(Kofarmatta, 2005).

Further still, Saminu Turaki of Jigawa State, who is now a serving senator was accused of spending ₦36 million of public funds to acquire oil blocks from the Federal Government, Reverend Jolly Nyame of Taraba State was charged with stealing ₦1.6 billion belonging to the state, and Chimaroke Nnamani is standing trial for his alleged illegal diversion of public funds totaling ₦5.6 billion, alongside two of his former commissioners, Peter Mba and Sam Ejiofor and some companies linked to him, and Diepreye Alamieyeseigha was arrested on 40 counts of corruption and money laundering in July 2006, British authorities returned about £1 million (US \$1.9 million) of the alleged illicit gains that he stashed in British banks (Adesote & Abimbola, 2012).

The fourth republic episode seems outrageous because the quantum of embezzlement is unimaginable. Alli, Odunuga and Ikuomola (2016) wrote that fifty-five privileged Nigerians stole ₦1.34 trillion from the government treasury between 2006 and 2013. The period of looting spans the last three administrations of former Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, the late Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan. The breakdown of the loot included fifteen (15) ex-governors (₦146,840, 800.00), four (4) ex-ministers (₦7,050,000.00), five (5) ex-legislators (₦8,350,000,000.00) seven (7) former Federal Public Servants (₦6,906,600, 000.00), five (5) former state public servants (₦7,275,000,000.00), eight (8) bank officials (₦524,560,000,000.00), eleven (11) business men (₦653,150,000,000.00), all totaling fifty five people. Equally, a collation made by the point Newspaper of funds purported stolen or misappropriated by the Nation leaders and their appointees from the administration of Former Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida (rtd.) to the Jonathan era, put the value at about \$1.647 Trillion. The implication of the massive theft according to economists is that over the years, a lot of facilities have been left to decay, social institutions have been broken and infrastructure is comatose. An examination of the nation's infrastructure landscape shows that one main challenge facing the economy is that of poor social infrastructure and institutions. A large chunk of roads are in bad shape, electricity supply is erratic, access to potable water by majority

of citizens is limited and basic health care is almost non-existent (Adeleke & Adebayo, 2016).

Leadership Class Sustainability: Alteration of Legitimacy

The present dispensation of Nigeria's fourth republic which featured a personality synonymous with sincerity in the person of President Muhammadu Buhari raised the hope of Nigerians in that corruption will be accosted, but the fight which corruption put up damn the hope of Nigerians for a better society. That democracy in Nigeria is on trial is not a subject of contestation. The battle line has so far developed in multiple arenas and cut across vital constitutional issues that threaten to suffocate the process of democratic consolidation. One of the morbid symptoms of this deep and unsettled condition in our democratic order is the gladiatorial contest between the executive and the legislative arms of government, both at the Federal and State levels (Celestine, 2008). It would have been reasonable and meaningful if the contest between the two arms are in good faith and for the overall interest of the society, but it is such that while the executive support sanitizing the corrupt ridden system, the legislature with the support of the judiciary speak in favour of maintaining the status quo.

Evidence of the executive legislative face-off was characterized by the deliberate delay in the passage of the appropriation bill, 2017. The Nigerian public has been treated to an unseemly spectacle of incivility, marked by an exchange of unusually venomous words between the executive and the legislative arms of government. The roots of the current season of acrimony apparently date back to June 12, 2017 when, on the cusp of signing the 2017 budget into law, acting President Yemi Osinbajo, lamenting the delay in getting the budget passed, pointed the finger at the National Assembly accusing it of introducing extraneous elements into the budget. Days after signing the budget, the acting President doubled down on his initial charges against the National Assembly (NASS), this time flagging the possibility that the members of the legislative arm of government might have acted ultra vires in insinuating items that were not there during the ministerial budget defence before the parliament. Also, in both his official statement and later comments to press, the power, works and housing minister listed several important projects across the



country, the executions of which are being delayed by the ongoing contretemps. Among them are the Lagos-Ibadan expressway, the Bodo-Bonny road, the Kano-Maiduguri road, the second Niger Bridge and the Mambilla Hydropower project. These tactics deliberately adopted by the legislatures to forestall executive success in government.

This scenario which brought about disruption in governmental activities is largely due to the fact of the executive supporting the Motion of abrogation of corruption while the National Assembly (legislature) opposing the motion. Three forms of conflicts according to Aiyede (2008) can be identified in the interactions between the legislature and the executive at the National level in Nigeria since 1999. The first is underlined by a struggle for prestige and influence by each arm of government. The second relates to the conflicts arising from opposing perception of powers and roles by each arm in the functioning of separation of powers under presidential system. The third arise from disagreement over issues of policy and the effort by each arm to enforce its preference. In each of the conflicts in the present dispensation, the executive seem to be right because of their manifest support for abrogating corruption. Amazingly, the judiciary that plays the role of umpire had already played to the gallery, hence the average Nigerian has lost hope of a better society. No other incident would have been more discouraging than the act which led to the investigation of three supreme court judges, i.e. justice Sylvester Ngwuta, Justice Inyang Okoro and Justice Adeniyi Ademola of the court of Appeal, Ilorin. (Ikhilae, 2016). These various acts and collaboration especially between the legislatures and the judiciary has greatly altered legitimacy all in the quest of sustaining social class at the detriment of citizens' wellbeing.

#### Conclusion

With enormous example from the first republic till date, this paper has established the fact that our leaders have constituted important nuisance being lawmakers and breakers. This they do with impunity because of the mandate that accorded them, power, authority and legitimacy with which they were expected to move the country forward but has been stagnating the country. With Nigerians rekindled hope fading in the ailing condition of President Muhammadu Buhari whom all sees as the promoter of the rule of law that the legislature and judiciary

have destabilized, only the rule of God can prevail over the Nigerian leaders in the promotion and propagation of their class through augmentation of government fund which has been disrupting governmental activities and denying citizens of welfare packages.

#### Recommendations

To ensure meaningful governance in Nigeria, the under listed recommendations will assist the course:

1. Financial attribution to political positions should be greatly devalued; events have shown they augment more funds to themselves.
2. Politics should be defined as a social service which should be run on part-time basis.
3. Theft, embezzlements up to certain amount in government should attract death penalty as practiced in some countries.
4. Some moral code should be attached to political participation without which the aspirant should be disqualified.
5. Code of conduct bureau should be empowered especially in scrutinizing public position occupant so as to safeguard public property and treasury.
6. Contestants of political offices with traces of past corrupt acts should be disqualified from contesting.

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