

Political Corruption in Nigeria: Theoretical Perspectives and Some Explanations

Ilufeye Sarafa Ogundiya

*Department of Political Science, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Sokoto State, Private
Mail Bag 2346, Post Code 840001, Nigeria*

Mobile Phone: +234 8036059225, +234 8053426560; E-mail: oisarafa@yahoo.com

KEYWORDS Ethnicity. Prebendalism. Patrimonialism. Clientelism. Democratic Instability. Corruption

ABSTRACT Corruption has been the bane of legitimacy, democratic stability and socio-economic and political development in Nigeria. Indeed, any attempt to understand the tragedy of development and the challenges to democracy in Nigeria must come to grips with the problem of corruption and stupendous wastage of scarce resources. All attempts by successive regimes to nip the problem in the bud have failed. With the benefit of hindsight, virtually all the Nigerian leaders who have come in as physicians have left office as patients. What factors precipitate political corruption and why has corruption become endemic and intractable in Nigeria? The paper interrogates corruption in Nigeria through the prisms of Clientelism, Prebendalism, Patrimonialism, Neopatrimonialism, Soft State thesis and the theory of Two Publics. The article contends that these theories for a very long time have not only provided credible theoretical frameworks for the understanding of the development tragedy in Africa in general but also of the pandemic and seemingly insoluble problem of political corruption in Nigeria in particular. However, as a point of departure, the paper argues that rather than fattening the primordial public, the 'robberies' that have taken place at the civic public have further pauperized the primordial public, if fattening in this sense is taken to mean social and economic development. The paper further provides some further explanations for the endemic political corruption in Nigeria. The paper concludes that there is the need to demystify ethnicity and address the problem of citizenship in order to alter in a positive manner, the average citizens' psycho-political conception of the Nigerian state and thus reduce corrupt tendencies.