



Political Corruption as Catalyst for Social Crises in Nigeria: A Re-reading of Emeka Nwabueze's A Parliament of Vultures

Okechukwu Onyenweaku

¹ Department of Languages, Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana, Nigeria.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received:	September	25, 2023
Revised:	October	30, 2023
Accepted:	November	25, 2023
Available Online:	December	30, 2023

Keywords:

Corruption, Social Crises, Insecurity, Political corruption

ABSTRACT

The contemporary Nigerian society is unfortunately enmeshed in an unprecedented socio-political and economic conundrum, particularly traceable to the political elites who brazenly engage in corrupt practices with impunity. The bane of Nigeria's development, peace and social stability is the recurring emergence of terribly clueless and uninformed political leaders who collectively feast on the nation's common wealth; who consciously enthrone and celebrate mediocrity at the expense of competence; who institutionalize unfair reward system for their own selfish interests, and manipulate the electoral process to perpetuate the statusquo. It is this systemic corruption that Emeka Nwabueze artistically brings to the forecourt of his audience in A Parliament of Vultures, with a view to enlightening the masses and provoking political consciousness in them to effect the desired change. A cursory look at the thematic preoccupation of this protest literature brings to the fore a myriad of debilitating issues to address: institutionalized robbery, colossal inefficiency, electoral malpractice, brazen ineptitude, money-politics and monumental corruption. Consequent upon the foregoing, this paper critically examines political corruption in Nigerian as portrayed in the text. Through content and thematic analysis, the present study examines how incidents in the society of the text quite glaringly depict the Nigerian situation, and how these catalyze social crises in the country. The paper concludes that political corruption being perpetrated by the political class is enormously responsible for the avalanche of social and security crises that bedevil the Nigerian society at present, and advocates for a paradigm shift in the manner political power is exercised and governance approached by the political elites if Nigeria must recover from her current sorry state.



© 2023The Authors, Published by AIRSD. This is an Open Access Article under the Creative Common Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0

Corresponding Author's Email: okechukwuonyenweaku@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Deliberate indulgence in personal and institutional corruption, and the unbridled penchant to sustain the statusquo at all cost are undeniably the major clog in the wheels of Africa's (and Nigeria's) advancement, frustrating every development efforts towards socio-economic emancipation, poverty eradication and entrenchment of decent living condition. This social malaise manifests in multi-dimensional ways – bribery, embezzlement, extortion, favouritism, unaccountability and unfair reward system. In a society where individuals secure wealth and power illegally for person gains, misuse public power for personal gratification, engage in acts that violate the duties of an office holder with the intention to accumulate wealth illegally for personal benefit, corruption is said to be both endemic and systemic. The foregoing is unfortunately the lot of many African nations, including Nigeria.

The existence and manifestation of corruption in the African continent vary from rare (Botswana) to widespread (Ghana) to systemic (Nigeria), and the consequence is that out of the 148 poorest countries of the world, African continent alone houses 32 of such countries (Alabi, 283). In this circumstance, the Nigerian situation is severely disheartening because corruption in Nigeria is not only widespread but also systematic, and has become an institutionalized way of conducting official/public affairs. It has been acknowledged globally that corruption sits well in Nigeria. The Transparency International (TI), in its survey of corruption globally, places Nigeria in the 136th position in 2015 and 148th position in 2017. Today, the situation has abysmally worsened in this regard, making some analysts perceive corruption in Nigeria as part and parcel of everyday living, cutting across all strata of the society (Momah, 25; Alabi, 283) and defying age, sex, religion and tribe. Indeed, the worsening state of corruption in Nigeria is occasioned by the fact that people and institutions have continued to tackle the effects of corruption and not the actual causes --- where the social cankerworm really emanates from before its acceptance and spread.

Incontrovertibly, high profile corruption that has perpetuated the sorry state of Nigeria is being perpetrated by members of the political class who have developed gargantuan appetite for corrupt practices. The debilitating effects of their reckless actions are visibly detrimental because they occupy exalted public offices and exercise powers that are significant to personal and societal development. This is more worrisome in that “corruption goes with power, and whatever the ordinary citizens may have is not power”, and so, any sincere discourse on corruption must “locate it where it properly belong --- in the ranks of the powerful” (Achebe, 38). Nigerian political office holders such as members of the legislature, the judiciary and the executive arms of government (who misuse power they fraudulently acquire) are culprits in this circumstance. Considering their utterances and the activities they exhibit right from the time they nurse the ambition to vie for political offices to the electioneering process that eventually brings them into power, one can clearly see reckless indulgence in corrupt practices to achieve personal and party selfish ambitions. Ike (225) has rightly argued that a political party, for example, will not require intending candidates to pay one million naira for a nomination form and ten million naira nomination to contest under its platform “if the honest intension of that political party is to field persons willing and able to offer honest service” to the people they represent.

In a society terribly bedeviled and battered by corruption, literary writers usually respond to the ugly situation by vociferously challenging the system through their works. Emeka Nwabueze's *A parliament of Vultures* is one of such protest literatures that are crafted to expose the deep-seated, systemic corruption ravaging Nigeria over the years. From its thematic concerns, well-crafted plot, language use and well-suited imagery, it is obvious that the work is a harsh, unsentimental literary response to the political corruption instituted by the political class in Nigeria – particularly by members of the legislature (exposing how their selfish actions not only impoverish the masses, but also impede Nigeria's socioeconomic development). Against this background, therefore, this paper strives to examine, through content and thematic analysis, political corruption in the Nigerian context as effectively captured and accurately depicted in the dramatic work, and how this social vice catalyzes social crises and uprisings that have continued to confront Nigeria in the contemporary time.

A Synopsis of Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures*

Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures* is a harsh literary exposition in the dramatic genre of literature, artistically crafted to attack the socio-political corruption and misgovernance in developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The work is a deliberate exposure of the iniquitous leadership wickedness unleashed on the citizenry by those who purport to be representing them in the political circle, using an imaginary parliament as a focal point. It is set in an imaginary sociopolitical milieu that resembles one of the fragile, struggling democratic nations in Africa, severely battered by political corruption and leadership ineptitude.

Exploiting the widespread ignorance, illiteracy, poverty, deprivation and hunger that ravage the vulnerable citizens in the society of our text, notable members of the political class enthrone themselves and their fellow unqualified cronies into power through a massively rigged election. They become members of the parliament with no clear agenda for the nation and their respective constituencies aside personal enrichment. The election manipulation made possible through the instrumentality of Bob Brown in connivance with the nation's electoral umpire ensures a landslide victory for all the contestants from a particular political party without a single winner from the opposition parties. The Returning Officer compromises his statutory duties and eventually declares Chief Nathaniel Habamero, Madam Omeaku, Rev. Jossy, Mr. Bob Brown and others winners at the expense of credibility, justice and fair play. This development unfortunately marks the beginning of an unprecedented anarchy in the political history of the nation.

Fortunately for the system and the forgotten masses, two antagonists – Dr. Parkers and Mr. Ootobo – eventually emerge as the House settles down for its legislative business. However, this victory is short-lived as the other parliamentarians declare them thorns in the flesh of the Assembly members who deserve severe sanctions and possible annihilation. They are constantly reminded how they emerge as parliamentarians in the first place, their offense being that they want effective representation and selfless service to the electorate whose mandate they hold.

Contrary to the plans of the party caucus to syphon public funds and transfer them abroad with the help of Dr. Parkers (who they convince to return from the US and contest election on the platform of their party), Dr. Parkers alongside Chris Ootobo begins to talk about accountability and financial prudence when he eventually wins the election and is sworn in. Infuriated by this turn of event, votes of no confidence are passed on Dr. Parkers and Ootobo by their colleagues, and quickly followed by outright impeachment as Speaker and Secretary of the Parliament

respectively. This results in the enthronement of Chief Nathaniel Habamero and Madam Omeaku as the Speaker and Secretary of the Assembly respectively, notwithstanding the fact that Madam Omeaku is unable to write or read proceedings (minutes) of the parliamentary activities owing to her extremely low level of education. However, this unfortunate development is unable to deter Dr. Parkers and Ootobo, as they continue to voice out against injustice, embezzlement, and daylight pen-robbery that now characterize the activities of the House under the new leadership.

Chief Nathaniel Habamero-led administration cannot contain the 'excesses' of Dr. Parkers and Ootobo upon realizing that the conspiracy against them could not tame them or compel them into submission to the whims and caprices of the House leadership. The two rivals instead continue to speak louder and louder against unethical conducts of their fellow parliamentarians whose collective desire is to loot the country dry. For instance, they question the rationale behind approval of two billion naira for making mere dresses for the parliamentarians and hiring music group to attend a thanksgiving service for which the House is invited; they query the House leadership and demand explanations on why one hundred million naira should be voted just to organize a parliamentary party to celebrate the inauguration of the Assembly, while many sectors of the economy are in deplorable conditions that require urgent attention.

Unable to bear the constant heat generated by Dr. Parkers and Chris Ootobos' uncompromising attitude in the House, the House leadership accuse them of committing treasonable felony (primarily because Dr. Parkers has continued to write about the outrageous activities of the parliament and have them published in the national newspapers). Consequently, the House leadership conspired with the nation's top security agents, and Dr. Parkers and Chris Ootobo are arrested and detained without trial. With their exit, the parliamentarians now begin to distribute the wealth of the nation among themselves unchallenged by anyone.

Interestingly, when the despicable dealings of the law-makers become unbearable to the masses, coupled with the widespread anger generated by the unlawful arrest and detention of Dr. Parkers and Ootobo, the people finally decide to take their destiny into their own hands. A nationwide protest/revolution is eventually enforced, and the sitting government is brought down, beginning from the demolition and setting ablaze of the presidential mansion at the capital territory. The parliamentary building is thereafter set on fire, and the law-makers lynched by the angry mob, comprising mainly members of the University Students Union Government in a league with Men of Destiny, who are made up of unemployed, able-bodied graduates in the country.

Political Corruption in Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures*: A Reflection of the Nigerian Situation

The dramatic work, *A Parliament of Vultures*, though set in a fictional milieu, is a realistic portrayal of the unfortunate sociopolitical conundrum into which the Nigerian society has been plunged for many decades now. It loudly echoes the political corruption that has continued to batter the Nigeria's nascent and fragile democracy, with its attendant aftermath; it is a protest work crafted out of deep frustration over the brutal rape of democracy and good governance by the political elites on the one hand, and the consequent underserved sufferings of the helpless masses in the midst of abundance, on the other hand.

A critical re-reading of this dramatic text with particular focus on its thematic preoccupation brings to the limelight a myriad of disturbing issues to address: electoral malpractice, political godfatherism, institutionalized corruption, celebration of mediocrity, colossal inefficiency,

hypocrisy, brazen incompetence, political manipulation and mind control, self-aggrandizement and avaricious tendencies, etc. From whatever perspective one approaches it, the picture which this artistic work paints is that of failed leadership occasioned by colossal waste of public resources, with its attendant consequences on the people --- entrenching hunger, unemployment, malfunctioning education system, insecurity of lives and property, social crises, terrorism and youth restiveness. These existential realities in Nigeria inspired the crafting of this artistic work which reveals “the purgation of the writer’s frustration and hopelessness in the face of the brazen and unbridled display of misgovernance in his milieu” (Anumihe. 178). In all these, political corruption is particularly fingered as the worst culprit, a perennial feature of the Nigerian political system.

Indubitably, any useful discussion of corruption in Nigeria must inevitably situate the discourse around its political system, and channel it to the political class where corrupt practices are most prominent. Indeed, corruption is not alien to Nigeria and Nigerians. As far back as 1983 (four decades ago), the existence, widespread and enormity of corruption in Nigeria has started attracting deserved attention from well-meaning individuals. Achebe (41-42) regrettably states that

It would be impossible and, even if possible, of little value to attempt a comprehensive picture of the type and scope of Nigerian corruption. Most people will agree that corruption has grown enormously in variety, magnitude and brazenness since the beginning of the second republic because it has been extravagantly fuelled by budgetary abuse and political patronage on an unprecedented scale.. Public funds are now routinely doled out to political allies and personal friends in the guise of contracts to execute public work of one kind or another or licenses to import restricted commodities. Generally, a political contractor will have no expertise or even the intention to perform.

We have deliberately cited Achebe’s observation forty years ago to bring to the fore that political corruption in Nigeria is as old as the country itself. What Nwabueze’s work has done is to project and expose the current state of affair in this regard, its new dimension and the degree of impunity with which the political class perpetrate this social vice. To this end, this paper will engage in the discussion of political corruption as revealed in the text in these subheadings: manipulation of the electorate and the electoral process, misappropriation of public fund and lack of accountability, and unfair reward system, celebration of and reward for mediocrity and incompetence, examining how these manifestations of political corruption reflect the Nigerian situation.

Manipulation of the Electorate and the Electoral Process

There is a glaring revelation of tactical manipulation and mind control (of the electorate) in the activities of politicians in the society of our text. These are orchestrated by crook politicians to deliberately compel their victims to do their bidding, and by so doing, achieve their selfish political ambitions. The most unfortunate thing about this form of manipulation is that those being manipulated, deceived, controlled, used and dumped are quite oblivious of the intentions of their manipulators. The first set of people who are hoodwinked and manipulated are the electorate, the masses who are supposed to be the real custodian of political power and legitimacy. The politicians consciously create hunger, deprivation and illiteracy, and effectively use these weapons to subjugate the uninformed and vulnerable electorate, hence they succumb to their whims and caprices effortlessly. Mr. Asili, Madam Omeaku’s campaign manager, reveals

this reality as he addresses the electorate in their constituency (in a campaign of calumny against Barrister Umeh):

Asili: My good people of Anioma, what you eat is what you get from politics.

Now is the time for a little less talk and a little more action. (Dips his right hand into his pocket, brings out a ward of currency notes and raises it high for the crowd to see). This is courtesy of Madam Omeaku.

Voice: She is our man!

Asili: This is only the beginning. Now catch!

(Throws the currency notes into the crowd. They begin to struggle for them.

Madam Omeaku and Chris Otobo look at them with satisfaction. As they begin to leave, the crowd follow them, singing songs of praises for Madam Omeaku. (24).

What actually transpired is that the people are being brainwashed with material things into believing that Barrister Umeh's wife will not be able to give them food and money or allow her husband do so whenever they visit their home as Madam Omeaku would do, and so, does not deserve their votes. This trick becomes successful because the hunger intentionally created in the land by the political class, coupled with high rate of ignorance fuelled by illiteracy has taken away sound reasoning from the citizens. Consequently, Mr. Asili further reminds them of their reality and the material things they stand to get from voting Madam Omeaku and jettisoning Barrister Umeh and his promise of effective representation as he addresses members of the constituency:

Asili: My good people, you don't bath your body on the stomach alone. You know what you want. I don't have to remind you that the man who has just spoken to you is married to a Canadian woman. Will you vote for Canada? (Raises his voice). A man who is promoting husband scarcity in this nation, a man who has no regard for your mothers, wives, daughters, etc. He says charity begins at home when he is married to a foreigner? You cannot even be allowed to visit his house by that stump he calls a wife. I tell you my people, what you eat is what you get from politics. You need a representative whose house you can visit and be sure of good meals and drinks. And that is what Madam Omeaku stands for. (Madam Omeaku smiles broadly and raises her hands). If you visit Barrister Umeh when he gets elected, will his Canadian wife offer you pounded yam and bitter-leaf soup? (23).

Having being promised of material inducement, the jubilant crowd are convinced to vote Madam Omeaku. Mr. Asili and Madam Omeaku watch the people with contented smile as they fall on themselves scrambling for the currency notes thrown at them. This is characteristic of Nigerian electioneering campaign scenario, where ignorant Nigerians are being deceived with bags of rice and beans, wrappers and some miserable, paltry sum of money to sell their birthright.

Furthermore, the electorate are also being manipulated by politicians through deceit and fabrication of cheap lies to achieve false credibility and party acceptance among the voters. Party chieftains give revered titles and appellations to their flag bearers when they do not merit such symbols of honour and respect. For instance, Mr. Jossy is being addressed as 'Reverend' whereas he is not a priest of any Christian denomination; another contestant is being called a 'Professor' so as to ridicule Dr. Parkers for his rebellion against the corrupt system, and also to further create a positive impression about their party, and not that the addressee is actually a professor. This clandestine, deceptive act is revealed in a conversation between Madam Omeaku and Mr. Brown:

Brown: (waves his right hand) Forget about him. We called him reverend during the campaign because we thought the title would purchase us some credibility from the voters. And it worked (laughs heartily). Politics is no child's play, my sister.

Madam Omeaku: Imagine the likeness!

Brown: Oh! You think the professor is really one? He is a factory worker in London. We asked him to take the title to make our party look intellectual. You see, our people are obsessed with titles. He doesn't even have a certificate. After all, we haven't told a lie at all. We haven't called him Professor of anything. We just called him professor (sips his drink and laughs heartily). Politics is no child's play, my sister. Just trust me, Madam. I am a political juggernaut. (5).

This typically exemplifies what obtains in the Nigerian political system, where desire for unmerited and undeserved titles is high and these titles arrogated to the politicians in a bid to enhance their false dignity. Even those without any school certificate or professional trainings and qualifications acquire titles --- academic and traditional --- to portray themselves as learned, successful and accomplished. To maintain their inflated ego and relevance, they brazenly manipulate both the masses and the electoral officials to clinch victory at the polls through financial inducements, intimidation, threats and sponsorship of political thugs and miscreants. Among the political class itself, political godfathers and party chieftains manipulate, deceive and use their fellow politicians to achieve selfish political ambitions. In our text under examination, Dr. Parkers is manipulated by the party chieftains into abandoning his academic career in the US to return home and contest election on their party platform with the intention to use him achieve their aim of looting the nation's treasury to death. Again, the electoral system is equally

manipulated. The Returning Officer is financially induced to rig the election in favour of Chris Otok's party. The reason for his acceptance to compromise the electoral process is further revealed:

Brown: Forget about Dr. Parkers. He is no force at all. After all, we brought him back from America for a purpose.

Madam Omeaku: What purpose?

Brown: Having lived in the United States of America for more than fifteen years, we felt he should have enough connections to help us put money in foreign banks. After all, what was the worth of his campaign? He would have

crashed like a pack of cards if I hadn't stepped in to rescue him. Fortunately, the Returning Officer was my classmate. It wasn't difficult for me to negotiate the right figures for him as I did in your own case. (.4).

Electoral manipulation that enthrones wrong, incompetent leaders into sensitive positions of authority is the bane of Africa's (and Nigeria's) development, advancement and progress. In the contemporary polity, what matters is not what one is capable of offering to the society, his competence and useful experience, but how much money one has and is willing to offer as inducement to the electorate and election officers alike. This is indeed the highest height of political corruption that dangerously impede Nigeria's sociopolitical development.

Misappropriation of Public Fund, Lack of Accountability and Effective Representation

The primary role of parliamentarians as members of the legislature is to make progressive laws for the betterment of the citizenry and the society, ensure checks and balances, and assist the executive arm of government, through oversight functions, render effective services to the electorate. But the legislature in the society of our text comprises incompetent, selfish individuals who are united by a common purpose --- embezzlement (and squandering) of the nation's resources through misappropriation of funds and diverting them for personal use. These parliamentarians, of course, represent themselves, their families and political cronies, rather than their respective constituencies whose mandate they hold.

Right from the inauguration of the House, every issue raised before the Assembly becomes an avenue to milk the nation's treasury dry and distribute the loot among themselves. Dissenting views against this unethical conduct from Dr. Parkers and Otok are summarily silenced through votes of no confidence (which remove them from their leadership positions in the House). And with the emergence of the new Speaker, Chief Habamero, the House becomes a safe haven for misappropriation and looting of public funds. While basking in the euphoria of his manipulated victory, the Speaker informs his allies on how they would celebrate their victory and subsequent enjoyment that would accompany it:

Habamero: This is only to kick-start the day. We shall move from here to the Hilton. My Special Assistant has already made reservations for us. We shall

eat and drink until we are saturated. Then, we shall each check into a Presidential suite to cool off before returning to our homes.

Brown and Jossy: Up Speaker!

Madam Omeaku: Wait! Are we not entitled to inconvenience allowance? I mean for eating out or sleeping out. What are we parliamentarians for?

Brown: You know, she is correct. Madam Ho-ha!

Madam: I am fine!

Jossy: I support the position in toto.

Habamero: By the powers vested on me as the Speaker of the House, and Chairman of the Assembly, I approve the sum of two million naira for each member as inconvenience allowance. (15)

With this unfortunate development, the House adopts it as a culture to allocate and approve all sorts of allowances for the law-makers, and cover them up by resolving that the fund is use for one fictitious project or the other. For example, the two million naira approved as inconvenience allowance for members is to be covered up by calling an emergency meeting of the Political Affairs Committee at the Hilton Hotels.

As the new House leadership settles down fully for legislative business, more outrageous votes and approval of funds for frivolities to enrich members come to limelight. For instance, a member's idea of organizing a parliamentary party is quickly accepted, and a sum of one hundred million naira approved for that purpose despite the objections from Dr. Parkers and Chris Otobo over the unnecessary expenditure. Again, a huge sum of money is syphoned by the majority of the House members through voting and approval of funds to honour a mere church harvest thanksgiving. All arguments and pleas from Dr. Parkers and Otobo for the House to jettison the idea and channel the fund into useful projects in some sectors requiring urgent financial attention fall on deaf ears. Even when Mr. Otobo final opines that the amount voted for that purpose be reduced, the Speaker dismisses the idea with a wave of the hand:

Habamero: You can see, Honourable Otobo, that ten million naira will not be adequate to take care of the business. The bulk of the money will be disbursed through the payment of inconvenience allowance to members for attending the thanksgiving service. Extra expenses will be accrued through the making of appropriate dress for members and hiring the music group. I, therefore, approve the sum of two billion naira for this purpose. Approved?

All: (Except Dr. Parkers and Otobo) Approved! (47)

Dr. Parkers and Otobo are shocked to the marrow, but they are helpless as usual, as the decision of the majority would always stand. Similar votes and approvals follow subsequently as the

House continues to adopt novel tactics to embezzle and distribute public funds among themselves --- through inflated cost of contracts with no intention to execute them, award of contracts to party members and political godfathers, appropriation of funds for unconstitutional and unnecessary programmes and activities, and diversion of money meant for execution of projects in some ministries and agencies without accounting for their utilization.

There is no doubt that the dubious activities of the House members in the society of our text is a replication of the activities of the Nigerian legislators who have become parasites, devouring the nation's treasury without mercy. Through approval of outrageous allowances, the Nigerian legislators have become the highest paid law-makers all over the world, when the country itself ranks as the world's headquarters of poverty (harboring the world's poorest individuals). Nwosu and Onwuasoanya (116) inform us that a 2010 survey carried out by the Business Day Newspaper found out that the Nigerian legislature had gulped a whopping sum of 684 billion naira in eleven years of Nigerian democratic experience. Today, this figure has multiplied even in the face of increased poverty, lack and deprivation among the citizenry.

Unfair Reward System, Celebration of and Reward for Mediocrity and Incompetence

Nothing aptly captures the Nigerian situation in the dramatic text under examination than the unjust reward for mediocrity and incompetence in a society prodigiously blessed with enormously talented, educated and skilled men and women. In the fictional society of our text, a great number of highly skilled individuals contribute so much to the growth of the nation, and yet receive so little, while a negligible, incompetent few on the corridor of power do very little and receive much more than they actually deserve.

Unfortunately, politicians in positions of authority who should leverage on their skills and competences to transform the nation are seen underperforming because they have no prerequisite knowledge for the positions they have dubiously acquired. Yet, they amass so much wealth by creating an unfair reward system that celebrates and rewards mediocrity at the expense of expertise, competence, useful experience and productivity. A case in point is the emergence of most of the parliamentarians as law-makers representing their people (such as Madam Omeaku, Rev. Josy, Mr. Brown, Chief Nathaniel Habamero, etc.), who would never have any business with governance in any sane society. For instance, Madam Omeaku, who later becomes the parliamentary Secretary has no formal education, and thus, is unable to write and read minutes of the parliamentary proceedings. In spite of her illiteracy and gross incompetence, she becomes a strong force in the House, challenging highly educated and enlightened individuals and colleagues, including her own husband. Her cantankerous and boastful nature amidst ignorance is revealed as she engages in a strong altercation with her husband, Mr. Omeaku:

Madam Omeaku: (Angry) You're a shameless man! Now, let's compare notes.

You are an educated man, but yet you can't even maintain your family. With your

education, have you ever given us a decent life? With your education, you have wasted the best thirty five years of your life, and you have nothing to show for it.

I have worked my way into a position of authority without education. Do you know what happens in the University when they hear than an honourable member

of Parliament is coming to visit campus? Idiot! You are not ashamed to call me illiterate. You can't even speak better than I do. (10)

Actually, what matters in the present society is that one works one's way into a position of authority and begins to enjoy undeserved benefits therein, and not necessarily whether one has the capacity to deliver in that capacity. This is, unfortunately, our situation in today's Nigerian society.

Furthermore, Madam Omeaku's colleague who is being addressed as 'Professor' is a factory worker in London before he returned to the country and joined politics. He has no sufficient education, professional skills or any administrative experience whatsoever. Yet, he is declared elected as a parliamentarian. Again, through Madam Omeaku's political connections, her daughter, Nkechi, finds herself inside the government house where she is made the Chief Press Secretary to the President. She is only a secondary school leaver with no higher education, exposure and competence to function effectively in that capacity. Also, the new Speaker himself, Chief Habamero, is terribly clueless and uninformed when it comes to parliamentary affairs, and yet he is elected as Speaker of the Assembly. He continues to fall out with Dr. Parkers who often corrects his fumbling during plenary sessions. This embarrassing cluelessness often infuriates Dr. Parkers, and he would insist that parliamentary proceedings be conducted in line with international best practices. On one occasion, he refuse to be silenced as he bursts:

Dr. Parkers: Objection, Mr. Chairman! A majority is the number greater than

half of the votes cast. The plurality refers to the most votes cast regardless of the majority. The two-third majority is never, repeat never, determined by the Chairman. To determine a two-third majority votes, quickly double the negative votes cast and if equal to or less than the affirmative votes cast, a two-third vote has been clearly obtained. (35)

The Speaker, who is obviously ignorant of these laid down procedures (or rather wishes to jettison them), ignores the corrections of his learned colleague. He continues to lead the Assembly in a way that pleases him as his allies.

The foregoing is indeed our situation in Nigeria where competence is sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity, and incompetent public servants rewarded with more juicy political appointments. This unreasonable practice has continued to bring the wheels of Nigeria's progress grinding to a halt. The greatest sufferer in this circumstance, according to Achebe (19), is the society itself which has to "accommodate the incompetence of the favoured citizens and painfully endure a general decline of morale and subversion of efficiency caused by an erratic system of performance and reward." Indeed, when mediocrity is enthroned and venerated above merit and competence as a result of corruption, meaningful development becomes practically unattainable.

Social and Security Crises as Aftermath of Political Corruption in Contemporary Nigeria

Nigeria, the self-acclaimed giant of Africa, is witnessing an avalanche of unpleasant social, political and security challenges in recent time whose source is traceable to the mismanagement of political power and national resources. The political elites who have developed unbridled penchant for corruption are culprit in this circumstance (Olusegun, 16). Through enactment of self-centered policies, the political class has subjected the Nigerian citizens into appalling conditions that inhibit comfort, advancement and attainment of worthwhile personal goals and self-actualization. Selfish yearly appropriation of large chunk of the national budget for a few number of person in the National Assembly, extremely high cost of governance, abandonment of Nigerians during the Covid-19 pandemic era, subjection of the citizens to unwarranted hardship through the recent naira redesign policy, fraudulent conduct of the 2023 general election, unplanned and ill-timed removal of the fuel subsidy, and the 70 billion naira approved for the National Assembly members as fuel subsidy removal palliative, while 18 thousand naira is approved for disbursement to each selected vulnerable Nigerian are some of the current instances of slavery and subjugation into which ordinary Nigerians have found themselves.

The aftermath of the foregoing is that today, Nigeria has become one of the unsafe places in the universe for human habitation. As a result of anger and frustration, there is constant clamour for secession from some regions; young people now pick arms at slightest provocation to kill and maim. Nowhere and nobody is safe any longer due to widespread insecurity and constant eruption of social crises. It is a sad commentary that security challenges in Nigeria can be traced to the early years of military rule when large quantities of arms were imported into the country for the use of the military during and after the Nigerian civil war (Idris, 288 quoting Ese, 5), and some of which got into the hands of the civilians and ex-military men who used them for destructive purposes. Today, it is even more worrisome that the conduct of desperate and selfish 'civilian dictators' have resulted in an unprecedented proliferation of firearms and an astronomical increase in the number of miscreants with mischievous intentions to rub, kill and destroy. This has significantly heightened insecurity and social crises in the country.

The regrettable consequence of the young peoples' access to firearms and other instruments of terror is that Nigerian now experiences banditry, terrorism, armed robbery, assassination, Fulani herdsmen rampage, extra-judicial killing, kidnapping and vandalism. The nation witnesses a litany of horrendous incidents that have become a daily nightmare; there is nowadays perpetual fear and apprehension across the land. Adimora-Ezeigbo (20) and Tomi (328) observe that Nigerians live in constant fear at present --- fear of hired assassins, organized terrorism, militancy, agitation for secession and political violence. For instance, Onyenweaku (9) reports that just in one day (precisely on the 30th of May, 2021), Almed Gulak, a chieftain of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) was murdered in cold blood in Imo State; a legislator was abducted in Nassarawa State; 200 Islamic scholars were kidnapped; an INEC officer, a police station and an immigration centre were all burnt. He further informs us that on the following day, Justice Stanley Nnaji was kidnapped by unknown gunmen in Enugu State; unknown number of Nigerians were abducted by bandits in Zamfara State; Fulani herdsmen murdered 9 people in Enugu State, and another set of herdsmen killed a pregnant woman in Nassarawa State. At present, Nigeria records more shocking, gory tales than the ones being experienced in 2021. Indeed, the activities of the political elites have fuelled social and security crises in a manner never witnessed before in the history of Nigeria. And unfortunately, a remedy is not in sight.

A lasting solution to the current situation would be a conscious paradigm shift in the way and manner politicians approach political power and governance in Nigeria. A political culture that celebrates mediocrity and ineptitude, and encourages election malpractice and money-politics cannot guarantee peace, social stability and development of the nation. Nigeria is today fast becoming a failed state, and has been made a laughing stock in the comity of nations because governance has been left in the hands of a restricted cult of incompetent cabals who neither have the capacity to lead a twenty-first century society nor consider the welfare of the masses in their administrative policies and decisions.

CONCLUSION

Political corruption is a social cankerworm that has continued to truncate the development of Nigeria over the years. The debilitating impact of this social malaise on the lives of highly industrious and prodigiously talented Nigerians cannot be overemphasized. Regrettably, the political class who perpetuate the unfortunate statusquo through enactment, enforcement and execution of anti-people economic and political policies with mischievous and selfish tendencies are responsible for this state of affairs. Emeka Nwabueze's portrayal of this bitter reality in *A Parliament of Vultures* has been examined in the present study. The preoccupation of this paper has been to ascertain, through critical analysis of the text, how the dubious, corrupt activities of the political class catalyze social crises that bedevil Nigeria. The result of the enquiry has indicated that political corruption as exemplified in the society of our text is a direct depiction of the Nigerian situation, which has significantly contributed to social uprising, insecurity, poverty and under-development that characterize the contemporary Nigerian society. Consequently, the paper concludes that Nigerian politicians are largely responsible for the litany of social, security, political and economic challenges that menacingly confront the Nigerian society and her people at present, and advocates for a paradigm shift in the manner political power is exercised and governance approached by the political elites if Nigeria must recover from her current sorry state.

REFERENCES:

- Achebe, Chinua. *The trouble with Nigeria*. United Kingdom: Heinemann Educational Books. 193. Print.
- Adimora-Ezeigbo, Akachi. "Justice begets peace: Literature, insecurity and social reorientation." *Journal of the Literary Society of Nigeria*. 9 (2027): 20-21. Print.
- Alabi, A.R. "The fight against corruption and economic crises in developing countries: A comparative study of institutional framework in African countries." *International journal of law and contemporary studies*. 1 (2006): 283-284. Print.
- Anumihe, Nnamdi. "Moral debasement and travesty of leadership: Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures*." *A lion on the ijele dance: Festschrift in honour of Emeka Nwabueze*. Ed. Anyachonkeya, Ngozi. Abakaliki: Ojiaku Press, 2015. 168-169.
- Idris, Shehu Usman. "The role of language in enhancing security in the 21st century: The case of Nigeria." *Journal of the Literary Society of Nigeria*. 9 (2014): 293-294. Print.
- Ike, Chukwuemeka. *The story teller and national transformation*. Abuja: Oyster St. Iyke Limited. 2013. Print.
- Momah, Sam. "Can Nigeria replicate the feat of the Asian Tigers via its polytechnics?" A pre-

- convocation lecture delivered at the Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana, Nigeria. 2019. 25-26. Print.
- Nwabueze, Emeka. *A parliament of vultures*. Enugu. ABIC Books and Equipment Limited. 2000. Print.
- Nwosu, Emeka and Onwuasoanya, Frank. "Miscast in Africa's representative democracy: A thematic re-reading of Emeka Nwabueze's *A parliament of vultures*." *A lion on ijele dance: festschrift in honour of Emeka Nwabueze*. Ed. Anyachonkeya, Ngozi. Abakaliki: Ojiaku Press, 2015. 116-119.
- Olusegun, O. "Press freedom and corruption in third world countries." *International journal of social and policy issues*. 6 (2009): 273-274. Print.
- Onyenweaku, Okechukwu. "Language use and hate speech amidst security challenges in Nigeria: A study of selected social media comments." Paper presented at the African, world literature and English language conference, held virtually. 2021. 9. Print.
- Tomi, Obadera Felicia. "Language as an instrument of peace and security in Nigeria." *Journal of Association of Women in Colleges of Education*. 17 (2013): 328. Print.