

Analysing Economic Crimes in Nigeria: The Political Economy Approach

Omoleye Benson Oluwakayode¹

Abstract

Economic crimes in Nigeria have been on the rise in recent times. There has been a high incidence of crimes such as kidnapping for ransom, advance fee fraud, vandalization of oil pipelines and other property crimes. It seems these criminal activities have a direct correlation with the structure of the Nigerian political economy. This paper thus analyses economic crimes in the country, using the tool of political economy. The findings revealed that the political economy engenders crimes and criminality. The pauperised majority of Nigerians, particularly the unemployed youths have taken to crimes as responses to the oppressive political economy. The paper suggested a restructuring of the political economy to create a more welfare state that will improve the socio-economic conditions of the populace. The methodology of the paper includes the use of primary and secondary sources of information such as legal texts, statutes and the opinions of scholars in this field.

Keywords: economic crimes in Nigeria; political economy.

1.0 Introduction

There has been a dramatic rise in the incidence of crimes in Nigeria in recent times. The nation witnesses, almost on daily basis, perpetration of such crimes as kidnapping for ransom, advance fee fraud, attacks on oil facilities, stealing and other property crimes. The spate of recurrence is so phenomenal as to question the efficacy of the nation's criminal law regime. The upsurge in criminal activities may be the result of ineffective substantive law on crime in the country. It seems, however, that it is attributable largely to the nature and pattern of the political economy of the nation. Nigeria has been operating a capitalist political economy which pauperises the majority of the citizenry, engenders oppression, poverty and feelings of alienation; this predisposes them to crimes and criminality.² The paper opts for a political economy approach as a tool to analyse the rising economic crimes in the country rather than the traditional normative analysis of the substantive criminal law which appears superficial, often achieving little result in terms of understanding the dynamics of crime and criminality in Nigeria. The political economy approach offers expansive and holistic sociological evaluation of the entire fabric of the nation's socio-economic and political system. The paper therefore examines the structure of the Nigerian Political Economy from the period after independence to the present era. It thereafter, situates and analyses crimes within this context.

2.0 Analysing Crime: The tool of Political Economy

The relationship between the pattern of production, distribution, exchange and consumption on one hand and social phenomena such as state, religion and law on the other hand has been a subject of profound intellectual interest among philosophers, social scientists and scholars generally.

¹ **Omoleye Benson Oluwakayode**, LL.B, LL.M, Ph.D, B.L. Associate Professor & Dean, Faculty of Law, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. E-mail: benson.omoleye@yahoo.com. Phone: 08060570716

² Yema, Sen., Political Economy of Corruption in Nigeria; Available at www.gamji.com/article9000/NEWS9136.htm. Accessed 22/6/2016

This is the thrust of political economy. It stresses the relatedness of both the economic and political categories in social analysis³. The idea is traceable to Marxist jurisprudence and that of his later followers. Karl Marx, employing Hegel's dialectic, asserted that economic relations in human society determines the nature and character of all other social phenomena including law which he called the superstructure. In the words of Engels, his fellow ideologue.

All the social, political and intellectual relations, all religions and legal systems, all the theoretical outlooks which emerge in the course of history...are derived from the material conditions of life⁴

Under this theoretical construct, the state is only an organ of class domination, an organ of oppression of one class by another, its aim is the creation of 'order' which legalises and perpetrates the oppression by moderating the collisions between the classes.⁵ Although Marx and Engels did not write specifically on the correlation between the social conditions of people and crime, it could be deduced from their emphasis on 'class oppression'⁶ that they saw crime as being the result of poverty.⁷ The application of Marxist thinking in the sociological studies of crime and social alienation due to economic disparities has been a subject of interest to many social scientists in modern times. Karl Renner, a Marxist, emphasises the way in which law could be useful in the manipulation of material conditions, saying that the relationships between law and economy are subtle ones.⁸ On this he differs from Marx who saw economic relations as a determinant of law, part of what he called the super-structure.⁹ Karl Renner views 'the base-superstructure distinction as a metaphorical one that illustrates the division in society.'¹⁰ Quinney, another social scientist views some elements of crime as being proto-rebellion against falsified values;¹⁰ and Taylor, Walton and Young all supported the view that criminality was politically, economically and socially induced by material forces.¹¹ They all agreed that a relationship exists between law and the means of production. Applying the Marxist theory further, it has also been said that crime is largely the product of "surplus populations that have no real role in the means and relations of production- the unemployed and unemployable, the lumpen proletariat certainly exists in modern society and is the source of much of the crime..."¹² This thesis is certainly not valid in all situations. It does not explain crimes committed by the rich and well-paid working class.

3.0 Pre-Independence Political Economy

The oppressive political and economic structures of the British Imperialists in Nigeria created the kind of bouguise/proletariat economic situation stated by Marx in his theory. Concerning the nature of British Imperialists in Nigeria, Mimiko observed ...*the overriding need for a secure source of raw materials, an extensive but captive market for industrial manufacturers and foreign avenues for the investment of excess capital made direct physical occupation of the African continent from the mid-19th century inevitable on the part of the European Colonialists...*¹³

The colonialists were not only effectively in control of the political authority, in charge of the levers of government at all levels, they also controlled the economy; the means of production, distribution and exchange were in their control in collaboration with the local contractor elements. Describing the features of Nigerian economy in pre-independence era, a writer wrote:

Between 1951 and 1960, the major political parties played leading roles in unifying and locally mobilising the economic elites. Elites from majority parties in the regional assemblies who cooperated with the ruling Federal Coalition dispensed a wide-range of rewards

³ Ake, C.(1989). "The African Context of Human Rights" in J.O. Ihonubere (ed.), *The Political Economy of Crisis and Underdevelopment in Africa: Selected Works of Claude Ake* (Lagos YAD,) pp.86-96; Mimiko, O.(1995). "From Agitation For Human Rights to the Pursuit of Power: The Impact of Human Rights Organizations On Nigeria's Aborted Democratization Programme" In O.Mimiko (ed.)*Causes and Contradiction in Nigeria's Democratization Programme, 1986-1993*, (Akure: Stebak Publishers,) pp.196-214)

⁴ F., Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach, p.93

⁵ V. Lenin, *The State and Devolution* (New York, 1932) p.38

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ Doherty, M.(1997). *Jurisprudence: the Philosophy of the Law*, (3rd ed.), Old Bailey Press, London, 1997, p.265

⁸ Doherty, M.(1997). *Jurisprudence: the Philosophy of the Law*, *op.cit*, p.265

⁹ See Lloyd and M.D.A. Freeman, *Lloyds's Introduction to Jurisprudence*, London 1985, p.959

¹⁰ Doherty, M. *Jurisprudence: the Philosophy of Law*, *op.cit*.

¹¹ *The New Criminology*, cited in Michael Doherty: The Philosophy of Law, *ibid*

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ Mimiko, O.(1995) "The Political Economy of Human Rights Violation and the Imperatives of Democratization in Contemporary Africa", in Y.Dinakin, *Ado Readings in Law*, (ed.); Vol. 1, 1998, P.4-49

and sanctions, thus retaining their own positions and power and keeping the masses subordinated. Positions in government services and public corporations, licenses for market stalls, permit for agricultural export production, rights to establish enterprises, roads, electrical service, running water and the governing group allocated scholarship to its supporters... At all levels, local and regional after 1951 and federal after 1954- political leaders could use a range of controls, extending over local councils district administrations, police and courts to subdue any dissident minority.¹⁴

The ‘dissidents’ are not really in minority; indeed, they are the majority of Nigerians at that time. The ruling elites alluded to by the writer represented an infinitesimal proportion of the entire Nigerian population. Following decolonisation precipitated by factors of industrial revolution, international politics and increasing wave of nationalist agitations within the colonies, the structures of British imperialism in Nigeria were left intact, inherited, as it were, by the new class of elites. It became inevitable for the new elites to use law to maintain this economic structure. This engendered what Claude Ake calls deliberate criminalisation of dissent and outright marginalization of development criterion.¹⁵ The general atmosphere thus created was succinctly captured by Mimiko:

Under this scheme, labour is brutally repressed, individual and group rights and freedom are curtailed, and the state invariably becomes, in the hand of the ruling class, an instrument of the populace rather than their protection¹⁶

3.1 Post-Independence Political Economy

The political economy of post-independence Nigeria is more of crude capitalism than social welfare. It is a story of moving farther and farther on the ladder of capitalist economic structure; the ownership and control of key economic and commercial ventures remain in the hands of few elites- the politicians and their associates while the majority of the people’s living condition¹⁷ is that subsistence and in most cases, poverty. Nigeria adopted in the early 70s privatisation and commercialisation of key enterprises which aim was “to stimulate economic recovery and growth which can indeed be subsumed under the broad heading of fostering national development”.¹⁸ The policy continued in 1980s as Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which articulated further deregulation of the economy, making it a largely market- driven one, with minimal state control.

While the potential of the policy to stimulate economic recovery and speed up national development and growth was plausible, its effect of alienating the citizenry from public wealth and pauperising them was becoming increasingly glaring. In a press release with a prophetic undertone, the Senior Staff Association of Statutory Corporations and Government-owned Companies warned on this on December 23, 1983 in the following words:

The result of the firming out can only be a social and economic debasement of the masses of this country. It is an attempt to alienate the masses from the public wealth of this country while concentrating wealth in the hands of few capitalists who do not care if the rest of us and our unborn children remain in serfdom perpetually...¹⁹

The Nigerian Labour Congress on its part, had this to say:

...the sale of public companies and corporations would inevitably lead to economic slavery and pauperisation of the nation... To want to reorganise under private control is to ensure that accruing profit goes into private pockets and this will lead to retrenchment in public sector and bring untold hardship to the working people of this country.²⁰

Privatisation and commercialisation of key enterprises continued to be the thrust, and indeed the general direction of successive Nigerian governments’ economic policies.²¹ The economic policy may have increased the

¹⁴ En.m.wikipedia. org/wiki/Economic history of Nigeria. Accessed 15th June, 2016

¹⁵ Ake, C. “Rethinking Democracy”, Journal of Democracy 2(1)

¹⁶ Mimiko, O. “The Political Economy of Human Rights Violation and the Imperatives of Democratization in Contemporary Africa”, *op.cit.* p.51

¹⁷ Adetunla, A.V. *Nigeria’s Rebased Economy and its Role in Regional and Global Politic*; Available at www.e-ir.info/2014/10/13. Accessed 17th June, 2016

¹⁸ Guobadia, D.A (2006). “Issues in Facilitating Foreign Investment For National Development in Nigeria”, In D.A.Guobadia & P.T Akper, (eds.) *Foreign Investment Promotion in Globalised World*, Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Lagos, p.78.

¹⁹ See “Firming Out of the Parastatals” – The Stand of Senior Staff Association of Statutory Corporation and Government-Owned Companies, the Guardian, Friday, December 23, 1983 at pp.10-14

²⁰ See “Privatising Government Companies”, Editorial National Concord, Friday, November 11, 1983.

overall Gross Domestic Product of the economy, it has increasingly pauperised the majority of Nigerians. The National Bureau of statistics put the country's Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P) from 1990 to 2008 at approximately \$509.9 billion in 2013, making it the largest economy in Africa.²² The Nigeria's economic reform programme has been applauded by some key players in the international economic system (World Bank 2014); yet the ordinary Nigerians in their various social categories seem very distant and alienated from government policies and programmes.²³ Afrobarometer surveys carried out in Nigeria between 2001 and 2012 shows that over 70% of Nigerians said that the "economic policies must have hurt most people and only a few have benefited".²⁴ In another survey in 2007, 67 percent of the respondents said that the economic condition was "very bad" or "fairly bad"; 11% said it "was neither good nor bad" and 31% said it was "very good" or "fairly good".²⁵

The anti-people economic policy based on liberalization, privatization and commercialization continues. While the overall economic index, the Gross Domestic Product may show improvement in the economy as a whole per capital income, on the average remains very poor²⁶. This means that while the few rich elites get richer, majority of the people becomes poorer; "it ended up creating a small class of nouveau-riche, furthering the class gap, creating oligopolies and raising issues of transparency and accountability".²⁷ A notable scholar, professor Jega has questioned the sustainability of the liberal economic model to the development aspiration of Nigeria in the following words:

*The underlying objectives of neo-liberal developmental theories, and in particular the structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) are essentially focused on reforming Africa political and economic systems, so as to properly align and structurally adjust them to the exploitative machinations and general requirements of global capitalism, so that the leading imperialist, western industrialized countries could further expand the tentacles of their economic power by gaining new markets cheap sources of raw materials and new areas of lucrative investments. It is in this contexts that we can better understand and appreciate the wider and more serious implications of the micro-economic reform measures, which are embodied in SAP, such as currency devaluation, opening up of the economy through tariff reduction/removal, foreign investment in social spending and privatisation of publicly owned enterprises.*²⁸

In the 1970s, Nigerians political economy was based mainly on government ownership and control of key economic enterprises. The second National Development Plan, 1970-1974, *inter-alia*, declared thus:

*The government will seek to acquire by the law of necessity, equity participation in a number of strategic industries that will be specified from time to time. In order to ensure that the economic destiny of Nigeria is determined by Nigerians themselves, the government will seek to widen and intensify its positive participation in industrial development*²⁹.

Private enterprises are oriented primarily towards maximising profit with no or little consideration for political and social objectives. The management of privatised enterprise would be primarily concerned with ways and means of maximising productivity and profits rather than preserving full employment.

Incidentally, at our present level of socio-economic development, the private sector has not matured to the level where it conceived itself as having a direct and joint commitment with the government as regards the social responsibility for the abolition of unemployment.³⁰

²¹ See Public Enterprises (Privatisation and Commercialisation) Decree 1999, Investment and Securities Decree 1999, Nigerian Investment Promotion Decree 1995, Foreign Exchange (Monitoring and Miscellaneous Provisions) Decree 1995. Under the scheme 67 government enterprises have been taken over by private individuals & institutions.

²² Adetunla, V.A. *Nigeria's Rebased Economy and its Role in Regional and Global Politics* Available at www.e-ir.info/2014/10/13/nigeria-s-rebased-economy-and-its-role-in-regional-and-global-politics. Accessed 17-06-2016

²³ *Ibid*

²⁴ Lewis and Alemika, 2005, See Adetunla, A.V. *Nigeria's Rebased Economy and its Role in Regional and Global Politics*, *op.cit.*

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ Gross Domestic Product, (GDP): \$492.986 billion (nominal, 2015), \$105 trillion (GDP; 2015) GDP Per Capital : \$2,758 (nominal), \$6,184 (GDP), Fiscal Year: 1 April, 2015- 31 March, 2016, see CIA World Fact Book, en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Nigeria, accessed 22/6/2016.

²⁷ Augustine Agom, Abubarkar Madaki and Samuel Apinega, "Economic Reform and Democratisation in Nigeria" in *Law, Democratization and Social Change*, Oyelowo Oyewo & Ms Edefe Ojomo, eds., Nigerian Association of Law Teachers 2012, Bismott Global Concepts pub. Lagos, Nigeria, p.40.

²⁸ Jega, M.A. (2007) *Democracy, Good Governance and Development*, Spectrum Books Ltd, (Pub.), Ibadan, Nigeria, p.40

²⁹ See Federal Republic of Nigeria, Second National Development Plan, 1970-1974, Lagos, p.289.

³⁰ Okorodudu, F. (1988). *The Worker and Privatisation of Public Enterprises in Nigeria: A Legal Perspective*, Adepegba Printing Press (pub.), Ile-Ife, Nigeria, p.24.

3.2 Ownership of Land and Mineral Resources

The oligarchical structure of the Nigerian political economy manifests further in the policies and law on the ownership of land and mineral resources. The Land Use Act 1978³¹ divested the peasant farmers' ownership and control of their land and vest the same in the governors of the states of the federation.³² The underlying objective of the law is to make land freely available for commercial purposes in order to speed up economic development and growth.³³ Invariably the entrepreneurs to whom ownership of the land eventually pass are the few rich class of elites. Currently there is a raging controversy on the proposed grazing reserves to be established across the country for the use of cattle owners. Cattle rearing, being a form of agriculture, and being a business of private entrepreneurs, divesting ownership of land used for crop farming by one farmer and vesting same in another has attracted intense opposition across the country.³⁴

Exploitation of mineral resources especially non-solid resource is mainly in the hands of private entrepreneurs. The exploitation of petroleum resource, mining and the operations of down-stream sector are substantially being controlled by private firms under different schemes. This is under the general policy of privatisation and commercialisation of the economy. Indeed, the Federal Government of Nigeria is currently considering privatising the nation's refineries. Under the privatisation and commercialisation policy, allocation of oil blocks to the few members of the Nigerian Oligarchy has been on for several years. This structure of the Nigerian political economic has caused unending violence, crimes and criminality in the oil producing parts of the country. There has been vandalisation of oil pipelines, kidnapping for ransom, and other property crimes. Because of the high unemployment rate occasioned by this scenario, unemployed youths have formed various armed groups demanding for an increase in the proceeds of oil exploration for the oil producing areas of the country.

4.0 Economic Crimes: A Function of the Political Economy

The rising economic crimes in Nigeria can aptly be located within the matrix of its political economy; the political economy engenders crimes. It predisposes a large chunk of the population to criminal behaviour. The high rate of unemployment³⁵ has criminalised majority of the youth. In Lagos, its foremost commercial centre and former capital, it has given rise to what is known as area- boy phenomenon. These are loosely organised gangs of street children and teenagers, composed mainly of males, who roam the streets of Lagos state of Nigeria. They extort money from passers-by, sell illegal drugs, act as informal security guards and perform other odd jobs in return for compensation.³⁶ In 2007, the total number of area boys in Lagos was estimated at over 35,000.³⁷ Area- boy phenomenon has spread to other part of southwest Nigeria such as Ibadan³⁸ and Akure. In the northern part of the country, there has emerged a radical, blood thirsty group known as Boko Haram. It is an insurgent terrorist organisation that has claimed responsibility for over a thousand deaths and caused damages to property.

Although the group claims its emergence was based on ideological opposition to Western education, high rate of unemployment³⁹ could well explain its appeal to the youths.

Nigeria is a futile ground for street demonstrations, the country has an unemployment rate of more than 23 percent, and this is concentrated in young people⁴⁰

³¹ The principal piece of legislation on land holdings applying to the whole country

³² Section, Land Use Act, 1978

³³ See Omotola, J.A.(1984). *Essays on Land Use Act, 1978* (Lagos University Press), vi

³⁴ Under section 28 of the Land Use Act 1978, the Governor of a state could revoke existing rights in Land only for overriding public purpose.

³⁵ Unemployment rate is 6.4% (Q12015), see en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Nigeria, *op.cit*; unemployment put at more than 23% of the population.

³⁶ En.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Area_boys; accessed 23/6/2016.

³⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸ *Ibid*

³⁹ See www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/nigeria.120116/nigeria-crisis-could-make-the-economy-stronger

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

Economic factor, more than any other causes seems to be mainly responsible for Boko Haram phenomenon. Sowore, a Nigerian analyst and activist in the United States observed: “Boko Haram is a manifestation of the dissatisfaction of the poor and unemployed”.⁴¹ The heartland of the Boko Haram is the remote, semi-arid northeast of Nigeria. It is the country’s poorest region where a miserable education system and high unemployment among the youths provide easy recruits for extremists.⁴²

There is also the crime of kidnapping for ransom. It is almost a daily occurrence in the country; and the youths in particular have virtually turned it into an industry. According to a report, 25,247 cases of kidnapping have taken place in Nigeria between 1982 and May 2016.⁴³ The report says further:

*The kidnapping rate is the highest – 120 for every 100,000 people in the Federal Capital Territory which includes Abuja, Nigeria’s capital. Three states in the South also stand out (Rivers, Delta and Bayelsa) with unusual high numbers of kidnappings relative to their population size. One possible explanation is the region’s oil wealth otherwise known as the curse of the black gold. The United Nation’s New Service has also highlighted how oil extraction in the South of Nigeria has been accompanied by violence and criminality.*⁴⁴

Kidnapping for ransom and oil pipelines and vandalisation are symptomatic of high unemployment rate and general feelings of alienation of the people particularly in the oil producing areas of Nigeria; “the Delta is awash with weapons, unemployment is high and communities feel aggrieved at the lack of development”⁴⁵ says a report. The report says further:

*A rise in attacks in recent months by militants, seeking more control of the Niger Deltas’ rich oil resources, has cut Nigeria’s oil production by 25%*⁴⁶

Another report reveals that the statistics of kidnapping in Nigeria is a grim one:

*Nigeria is now the kidnap for ransom capital of the world...Nigeria accounted for 25% of global kidnapping in the last one year...in the first half of 2012 the African proportion (Nigeria) of the global total has increased from 23% in 2011 to 34%*⁴⁷

The ugly scenario has been blamed on economic factor; “Residents of the Delta blame unemployment and corruption for on-going criminality. They say the issue of kidnapping is rooted in the turbulence and frustration that has characterised the oil rich region in recent years”⁴⁸. According to a Nigerian Human Rights Monitor, Casley Omon-Ihabor, kidnapping started as a way to draw international attention to the difficulties of communities living in the region.⁴⁹ “It has become a very lucrative business for jobless youth. I tell you, if these youth were employed, they would not be kidnapping. But because they are not employed, because they are idle and not just idle, they are armed”⁵⁰ a Nigerian Political Analyst, Kunle Amuwo, also observed that kidnapping has grown out of tensions between the haves and the have-nots.⁵¹

5.0 Perspectives on Restructuring the Political Economy.

As indicated above, Nigerian political economy is the root cause of crimes and criminality in the country. It has been blamed for the poor state of the socio-economic conditions of the populace. There is widespread belief that the system engenders inequalities, economic domination or even slavery of the majority and that a restructuring of the political economy is the panacea. Economy crimes are but indicators of this system. Giving a perspective on this, Yema Sen observed as follows:

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² *Ibid*

⁴³ According to Global Database of Events Language and Tone (GDELT), see [Five thirty eight.com/datalab/mapping-kidnappings-in-Nigeria](http://Five%20thirty%20eight.com/datalab/mapping-kidnappings-in-Nigeria). Accessed 01/07/2016.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ Visit new.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/Africa/4790121.stm

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁸ *Ibid*

⁴⁹ *Ibid*

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

⁵¹ *Ibid*

...Nigeria's factors of production are too weak or rendered too weak to propel the country forward: difficult land access; underemployed; unpaid or unemployed labour; scarce capital; largely misplaced entrepreneurial skills; low technology; and a hardly existence industrial base; low productivity engenders unemployment and poverty which promote a youth bulge leading to criminal militancy or even war and a high crime rate. This is the story of the political economy of corruption in Nigeria...⁵²

He said further, proffering solution

There are two approaches at solution: one, the international community in the post-cold war era, must push Nigeria towards a left-of-centre leadership; and two, Nigerians themselves regardless of clan, ethnicity, religion, section, zone or region must rise up against their oppressors and enthrone a leadership also in the left-of-centre tradition. The leadership must be situated within a system of governance that rewards correctness substantially and punishes corruption and crime severely⁵³

The view has been expressed that the various problems confronting the country including structurally induced crimes could only be effectively addressed if the country is restructured along the line of true federal principles; “the Federal Government should shed its onerous responsibilities while allowing the states to take many more than they are currently handling”⁵⁴ restructuring will address issues of ethnic and religious agitations and put a permanent stop to the conflagration in the Niger-Delta.⁵⁵ Atiku Abubakar, a former Vice President of Nigeria put the matter thus:

...the call for restructuring is even more relevant today in the light of the governance and economic challenges facing us. And the rising tide of agitations, some militant and violent require a reset in our relationships as a united nation⁵⁶

There is however the view that there is nothing wrong with the present structure of the Nigerian political economy, those who canvass this view assert that what the country needs is good leadership that is free from the vices of corruption, nepotism and maladministration; “they call it restructuring but enlightened people realise that it is a cover for negotiating the partitioning of Nigeria to feudal lords who are waiting to rule the enclaves in which they want to keep the rest of us as slaves”.⁵⁷

6.0 Imperatives for Stemming Economic Crimes

As economic crimes are basically structurally induced in Nigeria, the political economy needs to be re-designed. There seems to be a consensus on the need to restructure the country. Differences however exist as regards the nature and form of the restructuring. Nigeria is currently up on the economic ladder of capitalism with privatization and commercialisation as the thrust of its economic policy. While the overall Gross Domestic Product may have recorded a little growth,⁵⁸ the general economic conditions of the populace remain poor.⁵⁹ The growth in GDP has simply reflected the prosperity of the few rich elite.

Thus unemployment rate is rising⁶⁰. In response, most unemployed, especially the youth have taken to crimes and criminality. There is, therefore an urgent need to revisit the socio-economic and political architecture in a way to re-distribute the wealth of the nation. Economic resources of the country, particularly the mineral oil is currently in the hands of a few individuals who have constituted an oligarchy. The seemingly unending violence, pipeline vandalism, kidnapping for ransom in the Niger Delta, the hub of oil mineral is largely an expression of frustrations, disillusionment and disenchantment with the present political economy of the nation.

⁵² Yema Sen, Political Economy of Corruption in Nigeria, Available at www.gamji.com/article9000/NEWS9136.htm.

⁵³ *Ibid*

⁵⁴ Erinosh, L. “What if Nigeria Were to Break Up” In the Nigerian Newspaper, THE NATION, Thursday 30, 2016

⁵⁵ Nwankwo, A. *The Reconstruction Nigeria Needs*, the union.com.ng/opinion/the-restructuring-nigeria-needs, visited 05/6/2016.

⁵⁶ Nigeria: “Restructuring Nigeria is a Must” in the Nigerian Newspaper, 20 June, 2016, see allafrica.com/stories/201606201485.html

⁵⁷ See Coalition of Patriotic Nigerians Both at Home and in Diaspora in Defence of Democracy’s Protest under the banner “Youths Condemn Calls for Restructuring”, in the Nigerian Newspaper, THE NATION, Sunday, July 17, 2016.

⁵⁸ GDP’s Growth Constant (Prices, National Currency) is 2.653% for year 2015, www.wconomywatch.com/economicstatistics/country/Nigeria.

⁵⁹ GDP Per Capital (Constant Prices, National Currency) is 532,549.36 *ibid*

⁶⁰ Unemployment rate is 9.9% in year 2015, *ibid*.

Although the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has been established to address issues of development of the areas, the measure is cosmetic; thus not much has been achieved by the Commission. Fundamental and holistic measures are needed. In this regard, I align with the suggestion of Arthur Nwankwo that:

The powers of the central government should be significantly reduced to issues of immigration, currency, military/defence and foreign affairs. Power, in essence, should devolve more to the federating units...the region must be in charge of resources within their space. These resources are to be exploited by the regions and an agreed percentage paid to the central government...⁶¹

In the meantime, the Privatisation and Commercialisation Programme of the Federal Government need to be guided. Wholesale adoption of the market economy philosophy will only continue to pauperise the citizenry. Already, key enterprises such as defunct National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), Nigeria Postal Agency (NPA) Nigeria Airways Authority (NAA) and many more parastatals have been privatized. The planned privatization of the nation's refineries must however be shelved. Some enterprises such as Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) must remain under the ownership and control of the Federal Government. The logic of the market driven economy does not value social welfare which addresses the interests of the populace. It is purely profit oriented. Nigerian Government must thus ensure that the policy of privatization and commercialization is properly guided to protect the collective interests of the peoples as a whole. Restructuring in terms of decentralising powers and responsibility to the states will also reduce tensions among the various ethnic groups, youth restiveness and ultimately the incidence of crimes particularly in the oil-producing areas. Security will also be enhanced; effective policing to curb crimes requires intelligence gathering and deep knowledge of different localities; this can only be achieved efficiently and effectively by putting this responsibility on the component states as the Nigerian police is presently overwhelmed and overstretched. In this respect I adopt wholesale the observation and recommendation of a notable writer, Segun Gbadegesin:

there is no denying the fact that the Nigeria Police is overwhelmed and overstretched. Some state governments, despite their own fiscal challenges, have had to raise funds for their police divisions. Yet crime is on the rise...I have identified a number of areas where we could make corrections and amend our constitution toward a more perfect union: cultural sensibility to land use, resource generation and allocation, and policing and security. I do not think that advocates of true federalism and restructuring are asking for much more...

Restructuring the Nigerian political economy is the enduring solution to the problem of economic crimes and criminality generally in the country.

References

- Adetunla, A.V. Nigeria's Rebased Economy and Its Role in Global Politics at www.ir.info/2014/10/13
- Nwankwo, A. "The Restructuring Nigeria Needs" union.com.ng/opinion/therestructuring-nigeria-needs.
- Ake, C. (1989), "The African Context of Human Rights" in J.O Ihonubere, ed; *The Political Economy of Crisis and Underdevelopment in Africa: Selected Works of Claude Ake*, (Lagos YAD)
- Ake, C. "Rethinking Democracy", *Journal of Democracy* 2(1)
- Freeman, M.D.A. (1985), *Lloyd's Introduction to Jurisprudence*, London.
- Guobadia, D.A. (2006), "Issues in Facilitating Foreign Investment for National Development in Nigeria" in *Foreign Investment Promotion in Globalised World*, D.A. Guobadia & P.T. Akper eds; Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Lagos, Nigeria.
- Jega, M.A. (2007), *Democracy, Good Governance and Development*, Spectrum Books Ltd, pub. 07, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Lenin, V. *The State and Devolution* (New York 1932)
- Mimiko, O. (1995), "From Agitation for Human Rights to the Pursuit of Power: The Impact of Human Rights Organisations on the Nigeria's Aborted Democratization Programme", in *Crisis and Contradiction in the Nigeria's Democratization Programme 1986-1193*" Akure: Stebak Publishers.
- Mimiko, O. (1998), "The Political Economy of Human Rights Violation and the Imperatives of Democratization in Contemporary Africa" in *Ado Readings in Law*, Yomi Dinakin, ed; Vol. 1, 1998.
- Omotola, J.A. (1984), *Essays on Land Use Act, 1978*, Lagos University Press.
- Yema, S. *The Political Economy of Corruption in Nigeria*, www.gamji.com/article9000/NEWS9136.htm

⁶¹ Nwankwo, A. The Restructuring Nigeria Needs, *op.cit*