

## **CORRUPTION AND DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN NIGERIA’S FOURTH REPUBLIC**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Corruption has been one of the main cogs in the wheels of sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Well-endowed in terms of natural and human resources, it is ironic that Nigeria remains one of the most under-developed countries of the world, largely because of the menace of corruption. This is why it is pertinent to pay particular attention to the issue of corruption, if Nigeria has to sustain its current democratic experiment. This becomes more pertinent given the fact that despite official institutional mechanisms designed to tame the monster, the upsurge in the manifestations of diverse forms of corrupt practices since the inception of civil rule in 1999 has continued to be a major source of threat to democratic survival. Worse still, while corruption is a global phenomenon, it would appear to have become more endemic and problematic in Nigeria, prevalent among both the leaders and followers. This paper explores the nexus between corruption and the democratization process in Nigeria since 1999. It reflects on the manifestations of corruption in Nigeria; offers explanations for their manifestations; shows its impact on democratization; and offers actionable remedial measures. The paper submits that unless concrete remedial measures are taken to address the problem of corruption, the chances of socio-economic development, which are essential for democratic deepening and survival, will remain narrow.

**Keywords:** Corruption, Democratization, Growth, Development, Nigeria.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the return of democracy to Nigeria in 1999, the democratization process has been hampered by a number of forces, most notably the phenomenon of corruption. Corruption has done a lot of damage to Nigeria polity and development. Well-endowed in terms of natural and human resources, it is ironic that Nigeria remains one of the most under-developed countries of the world, largely because of the menace of corruption. Corruption has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigeria's development and a way of life of doing things (Obadan 2001; Omotola, 2007). The first, second and third Republics failed essentially due to corruption of the political gladiators and the military's insatiable appetite for greed and power. This is why it is pertinent to pay particular attention to the issue of corruption if Nigeria has to sustain its current democratic experiment. Despite official institutional mechanisms designed to tame the monster, the upsurge in the manifestations of diverse forms of corrupt practices since the inception of civil rule in 1999 has continued to be an impediment to the goals of socio-economic development and democratization (Akanbi 2004; Omotola, 2008).

Corrupt practices did not begin today; the history is as old as the world. Ancient civilizations have traces of widespread illegality and corruption. Thus, corruption has been ubiquitous in complex societies from ancient Egypt, Israel, Rome, and Greece down to the present (Lipset and Lenz 2000:112-113). This does not, however, mean that the magnitude of corruption is equal in every society because some countries are more corrupt than others (Transparency International, 2001). In the Nigerian case, corruption is known to impact almost every facet of human organization, including the public bureaucracy, security agencies and financial institutions, among others. Dike (1999), for example, underscores these tendencies when he contends that the menace of corruption led to slow movement of files in offices, police extortion at tollgates and slow traffics on the highways, port congestion, parliamentary delay of legislation, queues at passport offices and gas stations, ghost workers syndrome, election irregularities, among others (Dike 1999). The import of this is that while corruption is a global phenomenon, it would appear

to have become more endemic and problematic in Nigeria, prevalent among both the leaders and followers. But successive Nigerian governments have always devised means of waging war against the menace of corruption, with varying degrees of success (Oladokun, 2007).

### **NEXUS BETWEEN CORRUPTION AND DEMOCRACY**

Corruption is a common phenomenon, which presents itself in different colorations and dimensions depending on where it rears its ugly head. Because it is widespread in terms of its coverage and extensive attention, the scourge has received in the communities or perhaps due to the fact that it has been over-flogged in the academic circles, the concept attracts different and multifaceted meanings from different people particularly the social scientists. Some of these definitions are self-limiting in what they cover as constituting corruption while others are encompassing. A definition of corruption that falls into the first category sees the phenomenon as any transaction which violates the duty of a public office holder with a partial motive of acquiring or amassing resources illegally for personal advancement and self-gratification (Odekunle 1986; Otite 1986). There is no doubt that crime of corruption in government threatens the moral integrity of a nation and hampered development. It is a clandestine activity. It is the act of siphoning public fund for private use (Egwemi 2012).

From the above, it is common to find people referring to corruption as the perversion of public affairs for private advantage. Therefore, corruption in this sense includes bribery or the use of unauthorized rewards to influence people in position of authority either to act or refuse to act in ways that are beneficial to the private advantage of the giver and that of the receiver (see section 2 of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission EFCC Act 2004). It also includes misappropriation of public funds and resources for private gains. One conclusion that can be drawn from this self-limiting definition is that a public official is corrupt if he accepts money or money's worth for doing something, which he is under a duty or an obligation to do. Also, by this definition, it is corruption for a public official to accept payment of cash or kind not to do what he is supposed to do or to exercise a legitimate discretion for improper reasons (McMullan,

1996). In a similar vein, Garner (1999) defines corruption as the act of doing something with intent to give some advantage inconsistent with official duty and the rights of other. Corruption has broadly been defined as a perversion or a change from good to bad. As a matter of fact, corrupt behaviour involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit (Sen 1999). Corruption is efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means or private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit (Lipset & Lenz 2000:112-4).

The self-limiting definition reviewed above may not be so appropriate in understanding the concept of corruption in line with the objective of this paper. This is because the definition has limited the phenomenon of corruption to the public officials alone as if private individual in the civil society are corruption free. In view of this, therefore, there is a need to find at least a definition of corruption, which covers everybody in the society. That is, there is the need to work for a more encompassing definition. A simple, uncomplicated and all-encompassing definition of corruption that is found to be useful in this paper is the one that sees the phenomenon as the acquisition of that which one (as a member of society not public official alone) is not entitled (Akinyemi 2004). The phenomenon of corruption in Nigeria that has engulfed the nation takes different forms at different scales. This explains why the various dailies in Nigeria are often replete with cases of illegal practices, which take different forms but commonly called corruption (Sunday 2004; Oyeyipo 2006; The Nation June 28, 2009). One of the commonest types of corruption in Nigeria is classified as looted funds with wealth, which are kept secretly abroad. This usually involves billions of dollars of stolen money by both political and military leaders. Another classified form of corruption in Nigeria is the one commonly referred to as misappropriation of public funds. This includes embezzlement, swindling and looting of public treasury. The classification of corruption shall be fully discussed in the subsequent section of this paper. Therefore corruption is a plague that is recognizable globally. Every nation (Nigeria included) and international organization is finding measures in tackling the menace because it undermines democracy, helps the wrong leaders get elected and distracts societies from confronting urgent problems.

In addition, corruption is a behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role, because of private gains such as personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or status gains. It is a behavior which violates rules against the exercise of certain types of duties for private gains - regarding influence (Nye, 1967). This definition includes such behavior as bribery (use of a reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism; and misappropriation - illegal appropriation of public resources for private uses (Unruh, 2008). Even though some of these definitions of corruption have been around for over decades, the recent development in Nigeria where discoveries of stolen public funds run into billions of US Dollars and Nigeria Naira, make these definitions adequate and appropriate. Corruption is probably the main means to accumulate quick wealth in Nigeria. Corruption occurs in many forms, and it has contributed immensely to hampering democratization process in Nigeria.

Regardless of the forms corruption takes, the summary of the various definitions of corruption can be extracted from Article 4 section 1(a-i) of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption has the following scope of application:

- a. The solicitation or acceptance, directly or indirectly by a public official or any other person, of any goods of monetary, or other benefit, such as a gift, favour, promise or advantage for himself or herself or for another person or entity, in exchange for any act or omission in the performance, of his or her public functions;
- b. The offering or granting, directly or indirectly, to a public official or any other person of any goods of monetary value, or other benefit, such as a gift, favour, promise or advantage for himself or herself or for any person or entity, in exchange for any act or omission in the performance of his or her public functions;
- c. The offering or granting, directly or indirectly, to a public official or any other person for the purpose of illicitly obtaining benefits for himself or herself or for a third party;

d. The diversion by a public official or any other person, for purposes unrelated to those for which they were intended, for his own or her own benefit or that of a third party, of any property belonging to the state or its agencies, to an independent agency, or to an individual, that such official has received by virtue of his or her position;

e. The offering or giving, promising, solicitation or acceptance, directly or indirectly, of any undue advantage to or by any person, who directs or works for, in any capacity, a private sector entity, for himself or herself or for anyone else, for him or her to act or refrain from acting, in breach of his or her duties;

f. The offering, giving, soliciting or accepting directly or indirectly, or promising of any undue advantage to or by any person who asserts or confirms that he or she is able to exert any improper influence over the decision making of any person performing functions in the public or private sector in consideration thereof, whether the undue advantage is for himself or herself or for anyone else, as well as the request, receipt or the acceptance of the offer or the promise of such an advantage, in consideration of that influence, whether or not the influence is exerted or whether or not the supposed influence leads to the intended result;

g. Illicit enrichment

h. The use or concealment of proceeds derived from any of the acts referred to in this Article;  
and

i. Participation as a principal, co-principal, agent, instigator, accomplice or accessory after the fact or in any other manner in the commission or attempted commission of, in any collaboration or conspiracy to commit, any of the acts referred to in this article.

In order to allow for a better understanding of the various forms of corruption, Scholars have over time classified corruption in various groups. For instance, Otite (2000) classifies corruption into five groups: Political corruption, economic corruption, bureaucratic corruption, judicial

corruption and moral corruption. Dike (2005) also argues that there are three major ways to classify corruption: Political corruption which is also known as Grand, Bureaucratic or Petty corruption and electoral corruption. The most important thing is that whatever form corruption manifests, it perverts public interest and unlawfully elevates private gain which is glaringly daunting the hope of democracy in Nigeria. Due to some broader and holistic studies on corruption most especially in Nigeria, corruption can be in (but not limited to) the following forms. These are:

Political corruption: - This is a form of corruption that takes place at the highest levels of political authority. It occurs when the politicians and political decision-makers, who are saddled with the responsibility to formulate, establish and implement the laws on behalf of the people, are themselves corrupt. It also takes place when policy formulation and legislation is tailored to benefit politicians and legislators. Political corruption is sometimes seen as similar to ‘corruption of greed’ (Dike, 2003) as it affects the manner in which decisions are made, as it manipulates political institutions, rules of procedure, and distorts the institutions of government. Political corruption are also activities manifested and connected with election and successions. This is done by the politicians or political decision makers manipulating people and institutions to retain power and office (Otite, 2000).

Bureaucratic corruption: - This kind of corruption has been branded ‘low level’ and ‘street level.’ It is the kind of corruption the citizens encounter daily at places like the hospitals, schools, local licensing offices, police, taxing offices and on and on. Bureaucratic ‘petty’ corruption, which is seen as similar to ‘corruption of need,’ occurs when one obtains a business from the public sector through inappropriate procedure (Nye 1967; Dike 2001:97-113).

Electoral corruption includes purchase of votes with money, promises of office or special favors, coercion, intimidation, and interference with freedom of election. Nigeria is a good example where this practice is common. Votes are bought, people are killed or maimed in the name of election, losers’ end up as the winners in elections, and votes turn up in areas where votes were not cast.

Another form of corruption is bribery: - The payment (either in money or kind) that is taken or given in a corrupt relationship. Bribery has some metaphorical allusions like “kickbacks”, “gratuities”, “pay-off”, “sweeteners”, “greasing”, “long leg”, “bottom power”, “chop I chop”, “scratch my back” etc. are all euphemisms for corrupt behaviour (Bayart et. al 1999; Egwemi 2012).

Besides the above, Fraud is another heinous form of corruption. It involves some kind of trickery, swindle and deceit, counterfeiting, racketing, smuggling and forgery (Bayart et. al 1999). Embezzlement is another form which is theft of public resources by public officials. It is when a state official steals from the public institution in which he/she is employed. In Nigeria, the embezzlement/extortion of public funds is one of the most common ways of economic accumulation, perhaps, due to lack of strict regulatory systems.

As Agbu (2003) has argued, the abuse of public office for personal benefit can occur without bribery, but through patronage and nepotism. Favoritism and Nepotism is a special form of corruption in which an office holder prefers to employ his/her kinfolk and family members. Nepotism, which is also common in Nigeria, occurs when one is exempted from the application of certain laws or regulations or given undue preference in the allocation of scarce resources or in carrying out judgment (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - OECD 1997). All these induce lack of trust and legitimacy crises, thus, hamper democratization in Nigeria.

Intellectual corruption is another form of corruption (see Omotola, 2006). Scholars who are majorly in academic are the faithful disciples preaching against corruption in different forums but the magnitude of corruption in academics cannot be overemphasized. Sexual abuse/harassment from lecturer of students, changing or manipulating of results, students inducing staff, academic politicization, plagiarism, etc. are all sort of corrupt behaviour that exist in academic circle

Tackling corruption is a global hurdle because it undermines democracy. Corruption helps the wrong persons to get elected and distract societies from facing developmental projects in order to deliver dividends of democracy to the people. The Lincolnian definition of democracy will be focused on here. He sees democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. This definition sees democracy as the popular function of the masses and thereby, if the people are corrupt, how would they deliver the dividend of democracy? This will hence be a difficult task to accomplish and thereby may result into legitimacy crisis, which is inimical to the consolidation of democracy. The nexus between corruption and democracy has overtime results into undemocratic government whereby powers do not derive from the people and hence breed corruption since the hallmark of such administration is lack of transparency and accountability. Corruption in turn engenders mismanagement of resources, which results in under-development, poverty and chaos in the polity. In such political environment, the freedom of press is restricted, a condition that makes possible the abuse of human rights.

There are significant cross national and cross-regional variations in corruption permissiveness, and attitudes towards corruption, which are strongly and negatively related to democratic attitude. In Nigeria, corruption may be seen as part of the inherited practices from old authoritarian regime and government has the implicit and explicit responsibilities of fighting it. Furthermore, stable democratic institutions and corruption are expected to be negatively related, but at first, this relationship sounds as if it is solely the rule of law, part of a democratic society, which prevents corruption (Akanbi, 2004). What about support for democracy and corruption permissiveness as cultural traits? Evidence from the world values survey shows that these two variables are, in fact are strongly and negatively related and that there is a great deal of cross-regional and cross- national variation in both. Corruption permissiveness is negatively related to support for democracy and to interpersonal trust. In virtually all the institutions of the Nigerian state, corruption rears its ugly head as the hallmark of official business. Democracy in Nigeria under the shadow of corruption requires prompt attention in order to acquire sustainable development and democratization (Aleyomi, 2012).

## **THE PROBLEM IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

To really come to grips with the dynamics of corruption in Nigeria, one must begin with its colonial history. The beginning of official corruption in Nigeria and the manifestation of a privatized state can be rooted with colonialism. The structural evolution of the polity, with its excessive centralization, concentration and personalization of power, according to Ibrahim (2003), “provided for a culture of unbridled corruption and fettered democracy”. By all standards, colonialism in Nigeria was built on corruption (Omotola, 2006). The colonialists killed social structures against corruption associated with pre-colonial Africa and replaced and/or transformed them to suit their own purposes. This process led to the emergence of ‘two publics in Africa’ such that while the primordial public was built on a system of accountability and control, based on moral principles, the civic public became a contested terrain for private accumulation based on amoral principles (Jain, 2003). The failure of the political elites, who took over from the colonialists in attempting to address the roots cause of corruption, and particularly the inability to transform the imported social structures, complicated the matter in the post- independent period.

Corruption in contemporary Nigeria has continued to grow in leaps and bounds in the country ever since the emergence of the elites, subsequent to colonial rule. The collapse of all the previous republics, the aborted First, Second and Third Republics, all had something to do with corruption (Omotola, 2006). Presently, one of the major threats to the fledging Fourth Republic is endemic corruption. As old as the country itself, corruption emerged as a serious issue during the oil boom of the 1970s (Omotola, 2006; 2008). The oil boom era “raised the stakes for the control of power at the centre, and corruption, in the guise of populist economic policies, became an explicit instrument of personal political agenda (This day, May 30 1999). The situation further deteriorated during the Second Republic under Alhaji Shehu Shagari. During this period, the state did not only become ‘prebendal’, but also predatory (Ibrahim, 2003; Omotola, 2006). These were manifested by the fact that the offices of the state were allocated and then exploited as benefits by the office holder. Again, such a practice was legitimated by a set of political norms, according to which the appropriation of such offices is not just an act of individual greed or

ambition, but concurrently the satisfaction of the short-term objectives of a sub-set of the general population (Omotola, 2006).

The second coming of the military to the political scene of Nigeria in 1983 marked another epoch of corruption in the country. Under the regimes of Generals Babangida and Abacha, the system was not only prebendal, but also praetorian. A praetorian system is one that “is corrupt and an unstable regime of coups, cliques and conspiracies tempered only by occasional political dictatorship” (Ake, 1996). Its major features include indiscipline, mercinerism, self-seeking, greed and avarice, sale of public office and prebendalism. Praetorianism is therefore the military equivalent of the corrupt society. Babangida’s regime did not fundamentally threaten the existence of Nigeria as a corporate entity and thus, the continued prosperity of the power elite, Abacha’s attempt to transform himself into a civilian president unleashed the very centrifugal forces that Nigeria’s ruling elite had been trying to put into a safe and secure bottle since the end of the civil war in January 1970 (Omotola, 2006).

The return of the country to a path of democracy in 1999, despite advances in the fight against corruption, has not been able to tame the monster of corruption. Rather, it has, as argued by Omotola (2006) soared and assumed the dimension of a scourge, as no arm or level of government is exonerable.

#### **MANIFESTATIONS AND EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION ON DEMOCRATIZATION, 1999-2012**

The problem of corruption in Nigeria is a political one. It affects every facet of the democratic governance of the state. The issue of corruption in Nigeria is a manifestation of the lack of political will on the part of the sovereign and the failure of the state to maintain law and order. Hence, business corruption is a symptom of the failure to contend with political corruption, which raises questions on the moral uprightness of the state to exist or on the political will of the leadership to pilot the affairs of the state. It can be argued therefore, that where there is no political corruption is where the state operates under a high moral law and upholds, protects and

enforces the rule of law on itself and on its citizenry. This is not the case with Nigeria, where there is high level of contract inflation, embezzlement and diversion of monies in banks, industries and other parasatals.

It has also been argued that accountability of elected representatives to the people is the hallmark of any democratic administration (Mabogunje, 1999). However, democracy in Nigeria has been plunged into crisis by its failure to ensure accountability of the ruler to the ruled as well as the inability of the state to make officials accountable for their actions and bring corrupt ones to justice. This is not to suggest that there are no institutions established to ensure accountability and checkmate corruption, but the best of these institutions has only earned the country the status of being rated one of the most corrupt countries in the world and, among African states. In 2009, Nigeria was ranked 130 out of 180 countries; 2010 Nigeria was ranked 134 out of 178 countries and the most recent one in 2011, Nigeria was ranked 143 out of 182 countries (The Transparency International Corruption index, 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively). The deteriorating corruption index showing in the above lines of analysis is evident in the slowing down in the pace of the battle against corruption (The Guardian, February 12, 2005:12). The point here is that the phenomenon of corruption ravaging all levels and all arms of government poses serious threats toward the realization of the ideals of democracy (Muhammed 2006).

It is sarcastic that most elected officers embark on a flagrant abuse of office and embezzlement of public funds and neglected accountability as their watchword. Corruption has eaten deep to the fabric of the nation's electoral body. The role of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is undemocratic because it appears to be a compromised set up serving the interest of the ruling party (International Crisis Group 2007). The gross ineptitude of INEC manifests in the services of upturned election results by the election tribunals, open admittance of election rigging (not without the connivance of INEC). Worse still, some of these actions were allowed to continue in the face of open admittance by the parties involved. The above reasons are pointers to the fact that democracy in Nigeria cannot be adjudged as fulfilling even though we have witnessed a triumphant enthronement of the system on the country. Worthy of note is that, there

seem to be a declining faith by citizens in the capacity of democratic institutions, which have been manipulated by profiteering political elite there by weakening the foundation and consolidation of democracy in the country.

Although corruption is a global scourge, Nigeria appears to suffer the most from it because the leaders are pathologically corrupt (Dike 2005). Everyone appears to believe that Nigeria has a culture of corruption (Smith 2008). Huge sum of money from crude oil, over the years, has corruptly been managed. Nigeria is a rich nation floating on oil wealth, but almost none of it flows to the people. Due to the effect of corruption, Nigeria has turned to be an oil giant that runs on grease of politics (San Francisco Chronicle 2007). This is evidence in the fact that top public servants are very rich because they harbor the mentality that public money belongs to no one. Some people refer to the wealth of the nation as “National Cake”. National dailies are crammed with news of how public officials are acquiring million-dollar homes (within and outside Nigeria) and stockpiling stolen public money in financial institutions abroad (Vanguard May 20, 2010). Nigeria appears a hotbed of corruption and the so-called war against corruption seems to be a ‘hurricane of corruption jingoism’.

Majority of the elected officials, appointees, and top government are corrupt. They often extract bribes from the citizens (business owners, those seeking to do business with the state, etc.) while performing their official duties. This is negatively affecting economic progress and diminishes the people’s trust in government. Corruption scandals are strewn all over the society like a straw hut in a hurricane. Some of the abound example are suffice. The wanton manifestation of corruption under the Fourth Republic includes the falsifying of age and academic qualifications by Salisu Buhari, the first Speaker of the House of Representatives (HORS); and the first Senate President, Senator Evan(s) Enwerem having been found guilty over similar allegations; financial recklessness and mishandlings on the part of some past senate presidents and other public figures, culminating in the removal of all these political figures from office. These include Senator Chuba Okadigbo, Senator Adolphus Wabara, the then Minister of Education, Professor Fabian Osuji among many other instances (see Omotola, 2006). What the foregoing revelation

suggests is that corruption has really become endemic and systemic in the country. Any attempt at curbing it must therefore rise above any lip service approach. The erstwhile chairman of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), Vincent Ogbulafor was forced to resign because of mountain of fraud charges against him (Ogbulafor 2010). Ogbulafor had earlier challenged the society to prove the 16 count charges against him but had to resign later to fight his corruption charges. The former governor of Delta State, James Ibori, who initially escaped from EFCC, was arrested in Dubai on money laundering charges (BusinessDay May 14, 2010).

The reforms in Nigeria appear to have made the country more corrupt because transparency and accountability in government has not improved. Some leaders are talking about anti-corruption crusade and at the same gratifying corruption. There have been a wave of corrupt and ethical scandals emission from the National Assembly; there was a N2.3 billion (about US\$361.1b) car scandal involving the immediate past Speaker, Dimeji Bankole and other members of the House of Representatives; there is also the recent bribery scandal between Farouk Lawan the former Chairman, House Committee on oil subsidy probe and Femi Otedola, the Executive Chairman, Zenon Oil and Gas over the alleged \$620, 000 bribery scandal involving them (Punch July 4, 2012). The former was indicted for sleaze, which has been supported by hard evidence. The purported video evidence, voice recording and the subsequent action by Farouk of de-listing Otedola's company in front of his colleagues before the report was adopted, are all hard evidence (Vanguard July 3, 2012). The National Assembly, most especially House of Representatives, is seemingly blatant to cover up and settle criminal matters (example of Farouk vs. Otedola bribery scandal) in the usual 'paddy-paddy' or 'family affair' style of resolving a serious criminal issues, which if it were in other climes, the culprits and dramatis personae would have been docked by now or be in court facing trials. It clearly shows that those who profess to be fighting corruption in Nigeria are themselves corrupt to the core.

Nigerian leaders have demonstrated their unwillingness to reform the society. Despite the number of top government officials involved in corruption, some of the alleged corrupt public figures who are still under probe were given national award by the President. Since corruption is

an abomination to political stability and economic prosperity, democratization process and development will be a mirage if necessary and frantic action is not put in place to tame corruption's monster in Nigeria.

Some of the effects or evils of corruption in Nigeria can be summarily put as follows

- a. Corruption leads to poverty. Despite the available and endowed resource in Nigeria, people are still leaving in abject poverty because of high rate of corruption.
- b. It affects the economy's 'backbone'.
- c. It wastes skills and resources
- d. It hinders foreign aids and It leads to the abuse of external aids when giving
- e. Corruption is politically destabilizing. It leads to all activities of election irregularities which in turn can hamper democratic consolidation etc.

To breathe a new life into Nigeria's effort of consolidating political system and economy development, and to improve the people's living conditions, the society must purge itself of high-level corruption and strengthen the critical institutions and infrastructure that drive the economy.

### **THE DRIVING FORCES OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA**

Corruption has become a viable enterprise in Nigeria. The question that often comes to mind is who are the culprits for the prevalence of corrupt activities in Nigeria? Is it the common person or those in power? Is there any way out? No matter how it is or how to tackle it, it is important to understand the drivers before sourcing for how to tackle it. The causes of corruption in Nigeria are numerous and multifaceted. They have political and socio-cultural variables. One of the drivers of corruption in Nigeria is the culture and weird value system of the society. It is practically unavoidable for any Nigerian to be corruption-free because of the deteriorated culture and weak value system of the society (see Dike 2003). Corruption has taught Nigerians wrong lessons that it does not pay to be honest, hardworking and law abiding because the culture has legalized illegality in the society. The struggle for survival in the society has become a race for

everyone. There is no place for morality in the society (Smith 2008). Government has also worsened the situation since the level of inequality in the distribution of wealth has been hiked by the kleptocrats.

Family pressure is another significant index for corruption in Nigeria. The influence or pressure of polygamous household or extended family system, and obligations to meet the family needs in Nigeria, are some of the causes of corruption. There is virtually no relationship between corruption and family orientation or culture in Nigeria. Corruption is linked to the strong family values involving intense feelings of obligation (Merton 1968:246-248). There is no gainsaying to espouse that poor reward system, bad practices of non-payment syndromes like ‘half-salary/quarter-salary’ or delay in payment of workers salary and lack of economic opportunity/late payment for services executed by business establishments in Nigeria pose serious and dangerous forms of corruption in the society. A society that has citizens who are achievement oriented, but have relatively low access to economic opportunities will face family pressure. This may lead to negative effects on the economy as such could scare away foreign and local investors. Little wonder Lipset and Lenz (2000) claim that the cultures of societies “that stress economic success as an important goal but nevertheless strongly restricts access to opportunities will have higher levels of corruption”. No doubt, corruption is detrimental to the socio-political and economic development of the nation.

Bad governance and outrageous salaries of the public office holder, most especially the executives and legislature is another source of corruption in Nigeria. The primary means of living wealthy apart from ‘money rituals’ in Nigeria is to hold a political office. Political office holders in Nigeria have engaged in various dubious and mischief activities to accumulate dynastic wealth which their generation born and unborn cannot exhaust. Billions of naira is what the Nigerian supposedly leaders are looting of treasuries and misappropriations of public funds without anything been done by the government to track them down (Lotterman, 2002). Instead, governments embark on ‘chasing shadow’ programmes and castigating the opposition. Over

\$214m identity card scam looms the country in 2003, but unfortunately, we heard of the beginning but we have not been able to know the outcome (Vanguard December 30, 2003). Examples of corruption cases that have been swept under the carpet are numerous and countless. Some of them shall be discussed in the subsequent section. Apart from the inability of the government to probe some corrupt offenders, lack of effective control and taxing systems are other problems. Government allocated over ‘₦5b’ (about USD\$790b) to a non-existent agency in the 2010 budget. This generated a serious uproar in the Senate but unfortunately nobody was brought to book (Nigerian Tribune 2010). Lotterman (2002) argues that bad rules breed corruption. Ineffective taxing system to Lotterman, makes it difficult for societies to track down people’s financial activities.

However, having passion for avarice, urge for a shortcut to affluence and comfortable circumstances, glorification, celebrating and approbation of ill-gotten wealth by the general public and giving out chieftaincy titles to corrupt persons by traditional rulers, are among the reasons for the persistence of corruption in Nigeria (Ndiulor 1999). It has been noted that one of the popular, but unfortunate indices of good life in Nigeria, is flamboyant affluence and conspicuous consumption. The ‘brazen display of wealth by public officials,’ which if questioned they might find it difficult to explain the source, points to how bad corruption has reached in Nigeria society. Many of these officials, before being elected or appointed into offices, had little or modest income. Since ‘wealthy’ and ‘high placed people’ are celebrity in Nigeria, some people get into dubious activities, including 'committing ritual killing for money-making' and stealing of public funds. The cases of ritual murder proliferate in Nigeria (see The Guardian, May 16, 2002; This Day News, July 7, 2002).

The unenthusiastic attitude and misplace of priority of the Law enforcement agencies is another cause of corruption in Nigeria. The lukewarm approach of those who are supposed to enforce the laws of the land as relating to corrupt activities in Nigeria, such the Judges, the Police Officers and some specialized agencies established for anti-corruption and other related offences could lead to people engaging in corrupt behaviour, knowing full well that they would get away with it.

Governments have been criticized for using the supposed law enforcement agencies as a political weapon against their opposition. Some cultural and institutional factors lead to corruption. For instance, before and during the 2007 general elections, government made use of Economic and Financial Crime Commission to chastise and frustrate Atiku's (the then Vice President) presidential ambition under Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The first threat to the process is President Olusegun Obasanjo's attempts to impose a successor, after failing the 'third term bid', by excluding strong candidates such as Vice President Atiku Abubakar, through intimidation, judicial proceedings and politically-motivated corruption charges. The resulting frustrations propelled establishment heavyweights into opposition and increased the ferocity of a campaign marred by violence bribery and corruption (see International Crisis Group 2007).

#### **TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE ANTI-CORRUPTION AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN NIGERIA**

Combating Corruption for Sustainable Democracy Concerned about the devastating effects of corruption on the social, economic and political foundation of nations, and decisions of launching a concerted and collaborative effort to combat it, scholars, individuals, parastatals, organizations, both governmental and non-governmental have one time or the other contributed to suggestions of combating corrupt practices to consolidate democracy. As causes of corruption differ from one country to another, so also, preventive, enforcement and prosecutorial measures that work in some countries may not work in other. Indeed corruption is one of the greatest challenges of the contemporary world and more sarcastically, Nigeria. It undermines good governance, fundamentally distorts public policy, leads to the misallocation of resources, harms the private sector and particularly hurts the poor. Many aspects of bribery and corruption include accepting gratification, giving or accepting gratification through agent or using office or position for gratification, fraudulent acquisition of property, deliberate frustration of investigation, making false statement, bribery transaction of public officers, false or misleading statement and attempt conspiracy.

In the light of the above seemingly uncontrolled acts of corruption on our polity and administration in Nigeria, government should demonstrate the leadership and political will to

combat and eradicate it in all sectors of government and society if democracy must be sustained and maintained. This can be done by improving governance and economic management, striving to create a climate that promotes transparency, accountability and integrity in public as well as private endeavours.

Also, there is the need for a virile civil society and general empowerment of the citizenry. Such empowerment may take the form of access to information about activities of government agencies. In this direction, the role of the media is indispensable. The mass media owe the nation a responsibility to expose any corrupt agency or official (Saliu and Aremu, 2004). There should be rules and criteria simple to understand and administer and the information made readily available: For instance, several activities in Nigeria undertaken by the government put it in a monopolistic position. And if a number of criteria have to be taken into consideration in arriving at a decision, then an element of subjectivity and judgment is involved. The problem may not necessarily be the degree of discretion but the extent to which the process is opaque and shrouded in mystery. Therefore, if the rules and criteria simple to understand and administer and information about them is readily available, then the government's decisions could be challenged or improved by the citizens. Furthermore, in the words of Akanbi (2004), the government should not use the anti-corruption commissions for arrest and prosecution of suspected culprits alone but also to provide a mechanism to prevent the malaise from spreading in our society.

The accountability mechanism provided by elections has failed to cleanse the system. The electorate, who lament the corruption of the present crop of politicians, has repeatedly voted them back into their aspired elective positions during elections. What enables the current system to perpetuate itself? Why don't the voters (specially the less privileged ones) revolt and refuse to vote for looters and plunderers and vote for those who propose reforms? From the behaviour of the people it seems that they prefer to vote for someone who can arrange the most favours from the system (and these favours could be rights being denied to them). It is these expectations of favours in gaining an unfair advantage and in getting around the system that partly explains why the less privileged voters do not refuse to vote for looters and plunderers and vote for someone

who promises reforms instead. They have little hope that the system will be fair to them and that it will ever function in accordance with the norms of civilized and democratized societies.

Besides, democracy can also be sustained if the military (and other forces of violence) are made subordinate to elected civilian control. Obviously, the military need to renounce political activities, be restructured, professionalized and re-oriented for it to be able to defend democracy (Ojo 2005). This is because civilian control of the armed service is an essential aspect of government of, by and for the people. In democracy, public policy is decided by the majority subject to the rule of law instead of brute force. There is therefore, the need to de-politicize the armed forces, re-define military priorities, programmes and commitment, re-assert civilian supremacy, and institute strong and effective mechanism for achieving democratic control.

For effective control of corruption in Nigeria, the society must develop a culture of relative openness, in contrast to the current bureaucratic climate of secrecy. Instead of the tribal prejudice, state of origin syndrome and nepotism or favoritism, which have colored the Nigeria economic and socio-political landscape, meritocracy should be adopted in employment and distribution of national resources. More importantly, to sustain democracy, it would involve among other things, protection of human rights and rule of law, strengthening judicial and legislative institution as well as other agencies to hold state power accountable. The leadership must muster the political will to tackle the problem head-on Fighting and Safeguarding the nation's Integrity (Image) and democracy (see Nwezeh 2011).

Low salaries lure most public servants into corruption. Salaries of public and private sectors' personnel need to be increased. This does not insinuate that this measure alone will be enough for tackling the issue of corruption. But the argument here is that workers should be well-paid at least to reduce the bait of being tempted with corruption or corrupt activities. Substantial salary revisions should be able to attract the more educated and enterprising young men and women into the public sector. However, their entry into the public domain is more likely to improve productivity and efficiency, a commodity also in desperately short supply in the public sector, its

impact on the level of corruption is likely to be marginal and drastically minimized without strong accountability mechanism.

Others include empowering democratic governance at the local level, ensuring the equal status and full participation of women, empowering marginalized groups to become partners in the restructuring of their societies, invigorating civil society and the autonomous mass media, securing fundamental workers' rights, especially freedom of association, ensuring that those who work non-violently for the democratic transformation of their societies are provided the space and resources needed for their task, radical reform and rehabilitation of the educational sector in order to restore and enhance standards, cultivating democratic values and beliefs and resolving conflicts over minority group rights and claims through the spirit and mechanism of democracy.

Above all, attention has been drawn to the need to integrate the domestic control of corruption with existing international instrument against the vice. Such international initiatives include those instituted by the IMF's policy of linking good governance with effective battle to reduce corruption. Likewise, the United Nation made a declaration against corruption and bribery in 1996. All these and others may be integrated with the national efforts to enhance its effectiveness (Saliu and Aremu, 2004).

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Corruption is a serious problem negating Nigeria's democratization process. This is because it is bedevil by such problems as mismanagement, wasteful spending, and spending States fund on unproductive sectors among others. Though, kudos should be given to the former Nigerian President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo for initiating and setting up structures and institutions (ICPC and EFCC) to fight corruption, this effort has made public office holders to be conscious of their dealings in power. Although, many people have criticized the government of using it as a political weapon, but still to all, it is a very good step in the right direction considering the intensity of the endemic problem of corruption and how it has set the country back in its quest for democratic pursuit. Therefore, fighting corruption does not necessarily mean a task for

government alone. It should be a product of a joint effort by everybody in the country. Fighting corruption in Nigeria needs the joint efforts of the private and public sector and even the ordinary citizen (Dike 2003; Nwezeh 2011; Punch July 4, 2012). Nigeria equally needs re-orientation and new value systems that will enhance people's commitment and confidence in government. Full democratization needs serious efforts from the government and commitment of the people. Public office holders should equally renew their commitment towards the people's needs and be more alive to their responsibility. Nevertheless, the strengthening and empowering of the institutions of fighting corruption through law, making them independent and institutionalizing them will go a long way to tame the monster called corruption. And if not, democratization process, fast growth and sustainable development in Nigeria will be a mirage.

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