

CORRUPTION AND THE CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

God'stime Osariyekemwen Igiebor

Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

It has been observed by scholars and commentators that one of the greatest threats to political and economic development of any country is corruption. The consequences of corruption are inimical and harmful to the progress of any society. Against this backdrop, this paper interrogates the notion of corruption as an ill in the socio-political and economic fabric of Nigeria. The paper posits that the culture of corruption that has become entrenched into the socio-political and economic fabric of the contemporary Nigerian society is from top-bottom. Consequently, for this malaise to become manageable or eradicated, the leadership must shun corruption, become more accountable and ensure that offenders are punished. It also advocate for a return to core family and good moral values which emphasized integrity and honour in the African setting. Secondary data were utilized in the analysis of this paper in a systematic arrangement that ensured that fundamental issues relevant to the subject matter were critically examined.

Keywords: Corruption, leadership, development, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of corruption has resulted in loss of confidence in Nigeria by Nigerians and the International community. International Organizations like Transparency International have reported that Nigeria, under President Goodluck Jonathan, remains highly corrupt stating that there is massive corruption at all levels of the Nigerian government (Adedoya, 2013). For example, in the 2013 global corruption ranking released by Transparency International, Nigeria was ranked the 35th most corrupt country in the

world. (Abdulmalik, 2013; Adedoya, 2013). Corruption can certainly impede the progress of any nation, its problem cut across religious, social and political systems and it affects everybody. It contaminates all strata of the socio-political and economic structure of society and it is a difficult problem to treat. One of the greatest threats to purposeful leadership, economic and political development of any nation is corruption. Good governance is therefore an illusion in a state where corruption is endemic and persistent.

Therefore, the challenges of corruption remain a major devastating issue facing Nigeria's development milieu. While, this phenomena has become a cankerworm in the fabrics of our system, its solution nevertheless rests with us (Nigerians). This paper therefore, attempts to identify the causes and effects of corruption on Nigeria's development, to analyze Government's role in tackling the menace as well as suggest possible way forward. The paper employs for its analysis, secondary data collected from official documents of the federal government, journals, Newspapers and other publications of local and international agencies. The content analysis/descriptive methods were adopted in the analysis of the phenomenon under study.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

Corruption has no homogeneity of definition, it depends largely on the perceptions of the actors, the profiteers, initiators, how and where it occurs. It also depends on the existing laws and regulations guiding actions and behaviours. In this vein, the World Bank (1997) defines corruption as the misuse of public power for personal benefit. Corruption has also been viewed as the behaviour that deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the action of someone in position of public authority, because of private motives such as wealth, power or status (Khan, 1996). The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) Act, 2000, identifies bribery, fraud and other related offences as acts of corruption. Akindele (2005) describe corruption as behavior, which departs from the

conventional rules of governance and actions of someone who occupies a position of authority. To Ngouo (2000), corruption is viewed as the exploitation of public positions for private gains. She also states that the lack of any civil spirit among all categories of civil servants leads to corruption and misappropriation of public funds. To Scott (1972), corruption connotes a deviation from certain acceptable standard of behaviour. Consequently, the motivation for corruption practices connotes the taking of undue advantage of a position of trust. It is a systematic vice in an individual, society or a nation which reflects nepotism, tribalism, sectionalism, undue enrichment, abuse of office, power and derivation of undue gains and benefits. Corruption also includes bribery, smuggling, fraud, illegal payments, money laundering, drug trafficking, falsification of documents and records, false declaration, evasion, underpayment, deceit, forgery, concealment, aiding and abetting of any kind to the detriment of another person, community, society or nation (Otite, 2000). Corruption exists everywhere in the world and it becomes the norm particularly if the chances of being caught and severely punished are slim and if it is a generally accepted or tolerated mode of behaviour. Corruption in Nigeria is a development and social issue which becomes an impediment to change and a serious constraint on economic growth and poverty reduction. It has become endemic and found in almost all aspects of life. Endemic corruption implies a breakdown of the rule of law and in some instances a loss of state legitimacy. Corruption is clearly the evidence

of absence of accountability, law and order which perverts the normal use of connections, networks and reciprocity and leads to increased personalization of State power (Odekunle, 1985).

Today, it is in common parlance that corruption is a major impediment to Nigeria's socio-economic development. The term development connotes a multidimensional process involving key changes in social structures, popular attitudes, national institutions, and including acceleration of economic growth; others are reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty (Todaro, 1989). Development connotes 'capacity expansion' which requires adequate empowerment of the state and the society such that they can function effectively in their complimentary roles through an enhanced state capacity as well as institutional and governmental stability. Within such framework, individual members of the society can find accomplishment in respect of the essential requirements of life. As freedom, development demands a great deal of autonomy for the political community, its component parts and the individual members of such communities (Sen, 1990). Like most developing countries, Nigeria is still struggling with the dilemma of corruption that has largely hindered social economic growth, discouraged foreign investments and reduced the resources necessary for infrastructural development, public service, and poverty reduction programmes (Adedeji, 1997; Bardhan, 1997). Moreover, corruption renders the development of democracy and the building of a society of opportunity more problematic (Ribadu, 2007). Thus, by diverting assets away from their intended use, corruption can

be said to be the single most important factor responsible for the failure of governance and lack of sustainable socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Several schools of thought have discerned the factors that determine corrupt practices in the society. For instance in 1995, USA secretary of state viewed corruption from the cultural perspective. According to this school of thought, it is in the Nigerian culture to be corrupt. While this argument might appear reasonable, it is however not a universal phenomenon or acceptable since it stresses racial and regional bans of corruption. The most probable arguments in this area would seem to be that corruption is determined by the stage of development and the type of government that exists in a society or nation. Also, typology of the Nigerian Federation characterized by burning issues such as, the struggle for resource allocation/control-resulting in arms struggle, vandalization and oil theft, ethnic cleavages and primordial politics have all been responsible for fuelling the very monstrous form of corruption ravaging the country's political sphere (Aluko, 2002). Therefore, the corruption in Nigeria to a great extent, is a subconscious predetermined position from ethnic and primordial pressure to acquire wealth from any source and at any cost as a share from the national cake- whether legal or not. Although corruption is a global scourge, Nigeria appears to suffer greatly from this malaise. The numerous reforms and lack of ingenuity and integrity of our leaders have aggravated corrupt practices in Nigeria's socio-political climate.

In most countries like Nigeria where corruption is high, government bureaucracy generates the environment conducive for corrupt practices. For example, Tanzi et al (2006), noted that governments of some countries creates incentives for bribery and corruption for political or other reasons and are sometimes directly involve in corruption. In some extreme cases, the government itself engages in corrupt practices to lobby their way through the legislative arms; this practice is reflective of the Nigerian scenario. Other determinants of corruption may include the level of salary and wealth. However, low salary level may not always determine the quest for corruption to thrive as highly paid public/political officers have either been accused of corruption or have been found to be corrupt (Adedija, 2013), Scholars have commented on the negative impacts of corruption on the growth and development of a nation. Ekpo and Agbenebo (1985) stated that corrupt practices inherently initiate distortions in the economic system and has the capacity to impair hard work, diligence and efficiency. They asserted that it subverts honest selection processes and distort prices. Akindele (2005) discovered in his study, that a strong negative relationship exist between corruption and development. He carried out an empirical investigation on the relationship between some key variables in Nigeria. He estimated a modified production function which included labour, capital, political instability, corruption and income inequality. He found out that the co-efficient of the corruption index was negative indicating that it was consistent with the stated hypothesis that, corruption retards growth. He contended that,

corruption in whatever form was inimical to the development of any nation.

Some efforts have however been made by both past and present Nigerian Government to curb corruption even though these measures have not met the desired objective. This includes the setting up of anti-corruption agencies such as are listed below:

- The “Corrupt Practices Decree” of 1975 promulgated by the regime of Murtala/Obasanjo.
- War against Indiscipline by Buhari/Idiagbon regime.
- Code of Conduct Bureau of 1990.
- Advance Fee Fraud & Other Related Offences Decree of 1995 by the Abacha regime which was later re-enacted as the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Act, 2006 by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo administration.
- Corrupt Practices: The Money Laundering Act, 2004
- The Economic & Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act, 2004.
- The Procurement Act, 2007.

These have come alongside the establishment of Anti-Corruption agencies such as:

- The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), 2000.
- The Economic & Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), 2003.
- Budget monitoring and price intelligence unit (BMPIU) which later transformed into Bureau for

Public Procurement (Enweremadu, 2006; Ukwuoma et al, 2008).

The most prominent and active of these agencies are the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), established in September 2000 and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) established in April 2003. These were part of the then President Obasanjo's anti-corruption strategy to curb corruption amidst adverse international attention being received by the nation due to the high rate and incidence of Economic and Financial crimes in the country. These bodies were touted by the administration as the most effective deterrence against corruption. Much of this optimism was derived from the activities of such bodies in other countries (e.g. Hong Kong and Singapore) which were said to have contributed to a drastic reduction in the level of corrupt practices through speedy investigation and prosecution of corrupt individuals. This optimism however turned out to be exaggerated, as both agencies faced deep institutional and political challenges which greatly limited their effectiveness and credibility, despite a spirited attempt to check corruption. (Bello-Imam, 2005)

The Elite theoretical dimension can be used to explain the ascendancy of corruption in Nigeria. Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), Gaetano Mosca, (1858-1941) and Robert (1911) are among the major proponents of the Elite Theory. The elite theory is a philosophical explanation of the role of the leadership as it affects governance including, socio-economic and

political matters. The term elite encompasses all those who through educational exposure, connection and talent, are materially empowered and exercises considerable influence in the socio- economic, political, cultural and intellectual life of Nigerians (Parry, 1976; Bottomore, 1976; Nwankwo, 1997). These Elites who belong to the privileged minority are imbued with organizational skills, leadership ambition and knowledge and information. Thus, they play significant role in orchestrating central policy issues and influencing which and what should receive priority in relation to others (Bachrach, 1967; Geraint, 1969; Varma, 1975; Ikelegbe, 1994). According to Ihonvbere (2009), elite controls and dominate the economy, exercise legal monopoly over the means of coercion, dominate the structures and institutions of politics and economy, as well as shape the ideological and philosophical direction of society. The genesis and development of the Nigerian elite is as interesting as the generic rooting of the Nigerian state. The new Nigerian elite which took over power from the departing colonial authorities also took over from them the development philosophy of the colonial administrations. This could be stated as the self-interested exploitation of the people and the country. The devastating effect of this formed the basis of development orientation in the post-colonial Nigerian state (Post and Vickers, 1973; Ayandele, 1974). Although the elite is meant to play a central role in promoting and designing democracy as is required in any society, the Nigerian elite however, have continued to impede the

democratization trend. They see democracy or governance more as a means to an end, having the tendency to self-enrichment and corrupt practices rather than nation building (Achebe, 1983; Enemuo and Momoh, 1999). Perhaps, this is responsible for the struggle to attain and retain power which has become a veritable war fought without restraint and with total disregard for the culture and conventions of democracy.

From the perspective of the Elite theory, one can explain that the culture of corruption that has been cultivated in Nigeria is from top-bottom. The leadership in Nigeria overtime has been alleged to be corrupt. A sizeable number of public officers especially, political office holders have become very rich after leaving office. (Sklar et al, 2006; Adisa, 2003; Adedola, 2013). The culture of non-accountability has infiltrated the entire fabrics of the socio-economic strata of both public and private institutions in Nigeria. Since the political elites have usurped the monopoly of power to allocate resources for personal benefits without accountability (Kew, 2006). In the same vein, bureaucrats have also embarked on survival and affluence mission to better their lot through misappropriation, and extortion of the public through provision of services (Wendy, 2004; Global Financial Integrity, 2013). The record of Nigeria is soiled with the absence of good moral and ethical values in the conduct of the ruling Elites which has adversely affected economic and political development. The National Planning Commission in Nigeria identified endemic corruption which results to low levels of transparency and accountability

as the major source of development failure (National Planning Commission, 2005). Toyo (2006) observed that the mass of the people who are underprivileged are the victims of this failure while the ruling class hypocritically engage in the condemnation of acts that benefits its fold. Therefore, the cyclical nature of corruption would continue except the political leaders in Nigeria shun corruption and fight it from top-bottom.

CAUSES OF CORRUPTION

Most theories on the causes and effects of corruption are a mix of issues bordering on poverty, greed, opportunity and the perception of associated risk. Indeed, there is no agreement on what the main causal factors are. There are ideological and world view differences and various scientific approaches leading to different explanations on causes of corruption. Among the various explanations, much premium has been placed on bad governance, cultural and ethical vices by some schools of thought. In this case corruption is seen as a product of poor policy implementation and weak social values, which manifests in unemployment, poverty, greed and moral decadence (Babatope, 2008; Aluko, 2002). However, the explanation for corruption in Nigeria cannot be unconnected with all of the above.

The long period of military rule which lasted for about 35 years out of 54 years of independence was without regards for democratic principles that could provide checks and balances. The use of discretion and arbitrariness in the conduct of governance without accountability

provided avenue for corruption. For instance, J.T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi the first military leader who ruled from January – July 1966 was brought up under the most passive and apolitical circumstances of colonialists military institution. He did not comprehend the implication of politics in general and was unable to identify the sphere of the Nigerian political system (Nwankwo, 1989; Ojiakor, 2001). According to Nwankwo (1989), General Yakubu Gowon administration (1966 – 1975) had so much money and did not know what to do with it. The transient national affluence occasioned by the unsolicited upsurge of mineral resources beclouded Gowon and his reactionary advisers' sense of judgement. They mistook the budding flow of petroleum for a permanent future of the Nigerian economy without conducting a critical analysis of the international market forces which determine the cost of petroleum and its relevant place to plan for national development. General Murtala Muhammed's administration (July 1975 – February 1976) was revolutionary as well as challenging. The coup of 1975, among other things, was an attempt to end corruption in the public service. He brought a new sense of mission and was radical in his approach to governance. He was cut short by the inordinate ambition of young military officers, who could not comprehend the firebrand approach to governance. The regime was however short to allow a better assessment (Nwankwo, 1989; Ayodele, 2006; Otoghagua, 2007). General Olusegun Obasanjo who took over after the assassination of his boss, General Murtala Muhammed, charted a new

course for democratic governance and constitutional development; however, he did not make any appreciable impact in fighting corruption or ensuring accountability in governance. Also, he had a pathological hatred for the intellectuals and did not see any intellectual dimension that is relevant to national development. He starved the universities of funds and began the distortion of the educational institutions through bad policy actions (Ayodele, 2006). Buhari who ruled the Nigerian state from 1983 to 1985 imprisoned every corrupt politician while draconian decrees were promulgated to check leadership excessiveness. However his highhandedness brought his administration to an abrupt end. The military president after Buhari was General Ibrahim Babangida who turned the country to a political laboratory, and came up with an ostentatious political transition that was described as the most expensive transition in Africa which distorted democracy at the end. With his intelligence and personal charm, he could have been placed in a historical vantage position of a leader, but he was unable to mix it with sincerity and discipline required of good leadership (Ayodele, 2006). General Sani Abacha's administration (1993 - 1998) was ruthless; the entire country became an extension of his personal estate and within the space of five years he amassed so much wealth than most countries in Africa. General Abdusalam Abubakar who came after Abacha was a cool headed and compassionate man, though he emptied the foreign reserves of the country in the name of democratic transition (Nwankwo, 1989; Ayodele, 2006). This record has

indeed made the Nigerian military a major source of political instability in Nigeria. They failed to fight corruption which was often one of the reasons for military intervention. General Obasanjo was accused of embezzling N 2.8 billion Naira during his tenor as military Head of state. General Babangida was alleged to have carted away the oil money accrued to the nation during the Gulf war, while Late General Abacha deposited billions of Naira in foreign banks before his untimely death (Otoghagua, 2007). These are just few cases of corrupt practices among military leaders that have not been successfully refuted.

Some of the causes of corruption as highlighted by Federal Office of statistics (2000) and corroborated by Bassey (2011), Babalola (1995) and Sadiq (2006) are listed below:

- i. Failure to apply standardized and comprehensible operational procedure allowed operators and public/political officials to operate with large discretion in the performance of duty with tendency for corrupt practices;
- ii. cumbersome legal and judicial processes which engenders miscarriage or delay in dispensation of justice;
- iii. Immunity from prosecution granted to some public office holders while in office; weak law enforcement mechanism resulting from incapacity to investigate and prosecute cases;
- iv. political leadership that is corrupt or perceived to be so does not only lack the will to fight corruption, but also,

through its actions and inactions encourages the followership to be corrupt; weak administrative control mechanism for fraud prevention in many government establishments;

- v. extremely poor welfare and working conditions which results to low standard of living often induces officials to engage in bribery and corruption;
- vi. The increasing unemployment and the attendant social insecurity have brought pressure on the few office holders who are tempted to engage in corrupt practices as a means to service their numerous dependants. This remains a major motivation for corruption in Nigeria;
- vii. The quests for excessive materialism, erosion of ethical and moral values and poor human resources development which have left the people without relevant skills to improve the pace of development.

CORRUPTION AND ITS EFFECT ON DEVELOPMENT

Corruption is often seen as dangerous in any human environment. Its practices undermine growth and advancement and have severe socio-economic and political consequences. The trend in socio-economic deterioration as well as political instability in Nigeria cannot be divorced from the endemic corruption which has eaten deep into the structures of the nation's socio-political and cultural life. Generally, corruption leads to high cost of public projects and reduces the quality and

standards of goods and services. It superimposes informal practices over the proper rules and procedures of government adding direct and indirect costs to the execution of programmes. Corruption engenders economic distortions in the public sector by diverting public investment into capital projects where bribes are more copious. It also lowers compliance with construction, environmental, or other regulations, reduces the quality of government services and infrastructure, and increases budgetary pressure on government. Corruption slows down the pace of economic development through manipulation of funds for projects; it destroys or weakens efficiency and effectiveness of public service; it impedes government from prioritizing the areas of income and social inequality, poverty, and other areas of requirements (Omar et al, 2001; Igwe, 2010). The policy and decision making processes are distorted by greedy political/public officers, thereby preventing the public from optimum benefits of governance (Kayode et al, 2013). The effect of corruption manifests in several areas of national life by the deterioration in public services nationwide. The effects include:

Effect on Economic Development: Embezzlement of public resources and inflation of contracts would imply that fewer projects with lower quality would be executed with what would be left of government earnings as revenue. Consequently, the quality of services are poor and ineffective, infrastructures are substandard, abandoned projects are rampant with no one to account for them. This results to further budgetary allocation to service these inadequacies by

successive administration which gives room for more corrupt practices. A Survey was carried out in 2004 as part of a Governance and Corruption Diagnostic Study by Wendy Thomson, titled: Delivering Service in Nigeria: A Roadmap, conducted in selected states covering some agencies and institutions. These include Immunization, Passports office, National Electric Power Authority (NEPA/PHCN) now privatized and broken into different units under the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) Corporate Affairs Commission (Business Registration Unit), Hospital Outpatients Department, Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and Households. The Survey of Households, Enterprises and Public Officials reveals that poor people in rural areas complain about lack of access to potable water (consistently a top priority); education; healthcare; rural feeder roads; electricity; and general unavailability of markets. In urban areas, the services typically lacking are piped water; access to health and education facilities; regular electricity supply, if any; community facilities; and good roads. The constraints that have led to this situation according to the report are powerful, deep-rooted and endemic. Most services suffer from lack of funds for basic supplies and infrastructure improvements. Even when funds are appropriated, disbursements are irregular and fall well short of the budgeted amounts, making planning a futile exercise and halting implementation of projects and programmes in mid-stream. It was also reported that 50 percent of respondents doubted Government's commitment to tackling corruption and said they thought it was in fact getting worse (Wendy, 2004). The

above scenario can be attributed to the ills of corruption arising from misappropriation, mismanagement and diversion of the nation's wealth from productive and developmental uses profitable for the mass of the people (Sadiq, 2006).

Effects on Peace and Security: The level of corruption can endanger peace and security of a country. For example, the rate of insecurity in the country occasioned by the insurgency of Boko Haram especially, in the northern part of the country is partly as a result of the poverty, marginalization and lack of opportunities for human capacity development brought about by bad leadership and corruption in those regions (Clinton, 2009; Isa, 2010).

Effects on Political System: The effects of electoral violence and fraudulent electoral malpractices have corrupted the electoral process and weakened the electorates' faith in democratic governance. Governance is no longer perceived as a means of service to the people and the legitimacy of government is put to question. The corrupted democratic process has given room to autocratic rule and total disregard for the rule of law with impunity. The high incidence of political instability occasioned by the power struggle and violent engagement of some state Houses of Assembly members (in Edo and Anambra states for example) are all outcomes of a corrupt political system (Aliu, 2014). Fraudulent elections have impeded and distorted the functionality of the electoral system and political party development by which credible candidates are elected by popular vote. Corruption in elections reduces accountability and distorts

representation in policy making. Thus, corruption undermines the legitimacy of government and democratic values of trust and tolerance. The political system has been manipulated by the ruling elite to the disadvantage of the citizens which has induced some Nigerian nationals to take up arms in order to get more of state resources (Nye, 1967; Bassey, and Utre, 2007). This has been responsible for the formation of groups like the Oduduwa Peoples' Congress (OPC), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and Jama'at Ahlus al-Sunnah Liddawati Wal-Jihad or better known as Boko Haram which has caused wanton destruction to lives and property (Daniel, et al, 2014; Yan and Duthiers, 2014).

ENDEMIC CORRUPTION: SYSTEMIC FAILURE OR HUMAN FAILURE?

A lot has been said by scholars, commentators and stakeholders on the concepts of bad governance, state failure, failing state, political violence, endemic corruption, etc. Furthermore, weak structures, systems, functions, bad policies, ineffective justice systems, problems of policy implementation and poor resources management amongst others have been identified by scholars as responsible for the challenges of development in developing societies including Nigeria (Bassey, 2011). If we must ask ourselves some pertinent questions of who set the structures, systems, who performs the functions and who are the drivers of the state apparatus, are they not human beings? Why then do we focus so much attention on building effective structures, setting up systems of rules and regulations

to achieve efficiency in human's socio-political and economic activities and less efforts on the human beings? Why do we not exert much effort at regenerating, rebuilding and developing human capacity in terms of skills, adequate knowledge and good morals (Aluko, 2002) necessary for good conduct, human relations and leadership? These are necessary human ingredients that could replace greed, primordial culture and engender purposeful governance and mitigate or eradicate poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and other social vices from our societies. We have however, been content in Nigeria to fight the effects of corruption rather than the causes.

NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION

The political mentality in Nigeria presently is that politics is a means to wealth and that the end justifies the means. Indeed, the highest level and incidences of corruption in Nigeria takes place in the corridors of power as indicated by the number of state Governors and Local Government Chairmen that have so far been investigated but with inconclusive results (Haarhuis, 2005; Abdulmalik, 2013). At this level, corruption is carried out in over-inflated contracts with selfish motives, contracts are executed and re-executed countless times, monies given to public/political officers for their respective organizations, sectors and constituencies are diverted to personal accounts and most times, laundered to foreign accounts. This mentality has invariably permeated the common man who seeks every means legal or illegal to make his

own wealth or in the popular slogan "have his share of the national cake". It therefore falls on the leadership to take a stand against corruption and living by example which would in a multiplier effect, also assure enforcers of laws that they can perform their duties without fear or favour and that nobody is above the law (Haarhuis, 2005).

A report submitted to the United States Congress by the Secretary of State John Kerry, titled: "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012" which was prepared by the Department of State using information from US embassies and consulates abroad, foreign government officials, non-governmental and international organisations, and published reports, has alleged massive corruption at all levels of the Nigerian government. The document under the chapter on Nigeria in the latest report made available, Section 4, which deals with "Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government," reported Massive, widespread, and pervasive corruption at all levels of government and the security forces. The report noted that though Nigerian law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. It also scored the judiciary low noting that judges were easily bribed and litigants could not rely on the courts to render impartial judgments (Adedjoja, 2013).

On April 18, a House of Representatives Committee led by Representative Farouk Lawan and charged with investigating the fuel subsidy programme from 2009 to 2011 released a report showing massive fraud,

corruption, and inefficiencies in the operation of the program. The report alleged misappropriation of nearly half the subsidy funds, with poor or nonexistent oversight by government agencies. According to the report, estimated government money lost to endemic corruption and entrenched inefficiency amounted to 1.067 trillion naira (\$6.8 billion). The committee recommended reform of the oversight and enforcement mechanisms and further endorsed investigation and prosecution of culpable officials. In late July the EFCC began arraigning suspects, first with a group of 20 indictments, including six oil companies and 11 individuals. By the end of the year 2012, EFCC initiated prosecutions of approximately 50 cases related to the subsidy scam. Majority of these cases involved companies and individuals who had fraudulently received subsidy revenue. Investigations and trials had not produced any convictions (Anyagafu, and Sam-Duru, 2014).

Also cited was the stealing of #32.8 billion (\$210 million) Police Pension Fund, which led to the arraignment of six suspects including a director at the Police Pension Office, Atiku Abubakar Kigo, (who later rose to become permanent secretary in the Ministry of the Niger Delta) and the criminal charges against former Governor of Bayelsa State, Timipre Sylva, for laundering close to #5 billion (\$32 million) of funds belonging to the state. The report observed that though charges were instituted on February 24, 2012, the court adjourned the trial until January 2013. Other corruption cases cited in the reports were the arrest of former minister of Works and Housing, Hassan Lawal, for 24

counts of fraudulently awarding contracts, money laundering, and embezzlement of #75 billion (\$480 million); arrest of Mr. Dimeji Bankole, former speaker of the House of Representatives, and Deputy Speaker Usman Nafada for the alleged misappropriation of one billion naira (\$6.4 million) and #40 billion (\$256 million) respectively; arrest of former Ogun State Governor, Otunba Gbenga Daniel, former Oyo State Governor, Chief Adebayo Alao-Akala, former Nasarawa State Governor, Alhaji Aliyu Akwe Doma, and former Gombe State Governor, Muhammed Danjuma Goje. "The four (governors) allegedly misappropriated or stole #58 billion (\$372 million), #25 billion (\$160 million), #18 billion (\$115 million), and #12.8 billion (\$82 million), respectively. Their trials began in December 2011 and continued at year's end (i.e. 2102), the report noted. The report also contained the controversy over declaration of assets by Nigerian public officials noting statutory provisions mandating Public officials, including the president, vice president, governors, deputy governors, cabinet ministers, and legislators (at both federal and state levels), to comply with financial disclosure laws, including the requirement to declare their assets to the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) before assuming and after leaving office. However the report noted that the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project and other groups in June, 2013 demanded that President Jonathan disclose his assets from 2007 to 2012 but the president refused the request (Adedoya, 2013; Anyagafu, and Sam-Duru (2014).

Every responsible government the world over, have the responsibility of managing the economy to engender economic prosperity through prudent, accountable and transparent leadership that demonstrates a no tolerant attitude to corruption by policy and by practice. It is common perception in Nigeria that once you belong to the class of the power elite or an ally, even if you are corrupt, you can be shielded from prosecution or the case could be rendered inconclusive if arraigned (Colombatto, 2003). Given the fact that allegation of a crime does not necessarily translate to conviction, yet, one tend to wonder if all the cases of corruption chronicled in this paper were mere allegations that lack substance. One tends to agree with the United States report that the government of Nigeria is encouraging corruption by the actions so far demonstrated. It is either high public and political officials accused or convicted for corruption in Nigeria are granted freedom, pardoned, exonerated or that the case would linger on inconclusively (Ibeh, 2013). This attitude of government without reasonable justification is a wrong signal to provoke more corrupt, violent and insurgent tendencies (as the case with Boko Haram) that could lead to astronomic poverty level and possible state collapse.

CONCLUSION

The source of corruption is extremely important for both academic researchers and policy makers as it stems from the institutional, cultural and political settings of a society which are the bedrock for development. The central thesis of this

paper is that corruption has to a large extent been institutionalized into the socio-political and economic fabric of the contemporary Nigerian society and that this is reflective of the slow pace of development. Corruption has greatly eroded the fundamental values of democracy and the essential principle that government should be representative and accountable to the citizens. The near total collapse of social infrastructure and other institutions is traceable to massive corruption and leadership crisis. When political leaders are perceived to be pursuing their personal interests excessively, citizens become disenchanted, questioning the legitimacy of leaders, of the process that produced them and of the state. The problem of democratic instability and sustainable development persists because the political system has failed to create, maintain and sustain transparent, accountable and genuine developmental culture for Nigeria's democracy. The Nigerian Government has been improving and strengthening the rule of law to monitor and punish corrupt officials; however, the enforcement of these regulations and sanctions has been at the loose end. Consequently, both the leadership and followership have become enmeshed in a political system that demonstrates a no tolerant attitude to corruption by policy but not by practice. Democratic stability will be difficult to attain in Nigeria as long as corruption remains endemic and unchecked. The fight against corruption may not yield a sustainable or credible result, unless they are part of far-reaching change to the fundamentals of Nigerian society. This

change must take into cognizance the use of its oil wealth, its systems of accountability, and the basic premises upon which government relates to the people it is supposed to serve. Therefore the importance of cultural change and economic and social reform is essential to the possibility of achieving credibility in government actions and social activities that would mitigate corruption and encourage sustainable development

TACKLING CORRUPTION: THE WAY FORWARD

The government of Nigeria has no doubt made efforts in the past to tackle corruption; these were mere cosmetics approaches since they lacked effective enforcement of appropriate sanctions. Consequently, the level of corruption remains astronomically high despite the institutions and arrangements put in place to moderate the incidences. To mitigate the practice of corruption, some measures for possible adoption are suggested below:

- i. The leadership should strictly adhere to and enforce the requirement for asset declaration by public officers before and after public service. This measure would to some extent mitigate the practice of corruption.
- ii. Corruption charges and trials should be given express hearing in the court of law so that those found guilty can be sentenced to serve as deterrent to others.
- iii. As a way of promoting transparency in governance, Government at all levels should bi-annually render account to the public or make

information available and accessible on budgetary allocation (revenue) and expenditure for assessment.

- iv. One of the causes of corruption is attributable to the increasing unemployment and the attendant social insecurity putting excessive pressure on the few office holders who are tempted to engage in corrupt practices as a means to service their numerous dependants. In this wise, government should reduce the high level of unemployment by creating the enabling environment for private investment and should also provide micro-credit scheme for agriculture and other businesses to thrive.
- v. The immunity clause preventing high serving public office holders from prosecution while in office should be removed so that they can be arraigned for corruption and other serious offences and sentenced if found guilty. The argument that such action would distract the activities of government does not arise as the immediate subordinate would take over and the process of governance would continue unhindered.
- vi. When the nature of corruption in a country becomes rampant as it is in Nigeria, it signifies a failure of governance. Therefore, the electorates/citizenry must ensure that those political office holders who could not fight against corrupt practices while in office are voted out through the instrumentality of elections. In the same vein, Nigerian

citizens known overtime to have displayed integrity and genuine interest for service should be encouraged and supported by the citizens and civil society group to contest for elective positions. The era of “vote buying” and primordial politics and sentiments should be discouraged in electioneering if Nigerians want to win the fight against corruption and underdevelopment.

- vii. A reorientation of our values, culture and reward system that places premium on integrity, honesty, hard work and patriotism should commence in all spectrum of our national life. Special attention should be placed on the youths and children who are the leaders of the future. These values should be integrated into the school curriculum and taught with passion, genuine interest and exemplified.
- viii. The citizenry must be sensitized and encouraged to demand for transparency, prudence and accountability in the management of governmental affairs. Accountability is about power, it is about people having the right to hold their rulers accountable for their decisions and

actions. Through civil society organizations and civil actions, they can and should demand that public officers who engage in acts of corruption be prosecuted and sentenced if found guilty; the law should take its proper course. They should ensure that such cases are conclusive and that nobody is shielded or granted gratuitous pardon after being convicted. The pardon granted to ex-convict Alamieyeseigha, former Governor of Baysa State is a case in point (Ibeh, 2013). The practice of protecting fraudulent individuals in the name of political or social affiliations would serve as a smokescreen for corrupt practices to continue to thrive.

- ix. The various stakeholders should therefore, appreciate the need to come together and show commitment and purpose against the evils of development and prosperity in the country. This collaboration should not only involve the executive arm of government, but also the legislature, the judiciary, the private sector, the media, the civil society organizations, local governments and the anti corruption institutions for greater effectiveness.

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