

## Corruption, Private Accumulation and Problem of Development in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Corruption in Nigeria is pervasive and endemic to such an extent that the country is rated the third most corrupt nation in the world. So many scholars have traced the roots of this social malaise to military incursion into politics. But recent events, particularly under democratic rule since 1999, show that corruption is not limited to a particular regime type, but it is very inherent in the Nigerian system. A usually expected concomitance of democracy, apart from representativeness, openness, accountability, probity and popular participation, is development. Unfortunately, the problem of corruption has not allowed Nigerians to enjoy such dividends of democracy. In Nigeria, those occupying governmental positions are benefiting from the state at the expense of the collective interest. Corruption in government increases poverty and weakens governments and lessens their ability to fight poverty. Though there seems to be a determined effort on the part of President Olusegun Obasanjo to fight corruption, unfortunately his efforts are not only not supported by many, but such efforts are also being sabotaged by many. Corruption in Nigeria manifests itself in a number of ways: in the electoral system, bureaucratic system, social system, political system, cultural system, etc. This study argues that as long as corruption continues in the Nigerian system, it would be difficult for the country to develop. It concludes that efforts should be made to stamp out corruption, so that the incidence of poverty in the land can be reduced.

**Key words:** Corruption, democracy, development, government, Nigerian state and private accumulation

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### INTRODUCTION

Corruption could be linked to terrorism against the Nigerian state as its effects are as deadly as HIV/AIDS or any other disaster or pestilence, natural or man-made. It denigrates and distorts the normal course of things and inflicts poverty and underdevelopment on the people. This social virus, no doubt, has indelibly ravaged the country, afflicting the rich and powerful, the poor and the powerless alike. As a major cankerworm, it has eaten deep into all fabrics of the Nigerian system.

Corruption in Nigeria is so pervasive and endemic that the country is rated the third most corrupt nation in the world. It seems corruption is very inherent in the Nigerian system. In Nigeria at present, the major way of determining and measuring success tends to be material things. Owing to this and the all-consuming competition to acquire material things through corrupt practices, there are social, economic and moral dislocations of the society.

Ordinarily, the goal of any nation should be the overall development of the people in all facets of life. The Nigerian state is well positioned to ensure the growth and development of the people as it is well blessed in both human and natural resources. But poor management of

these resources, coupled with pervasive corruption in the land, has stifled development with the result that the vast majority of the people live below the poverty line. Corruption in the country is traceable to primitive private accumulation by the elite. This study examines the effects of corruption and elite private accumulation on the development of the Nigerian state. As a point of departure, it is apposite to undertake a contextual analysis of corruption and development.

**Contextual analysis of corruption and development:** There are no generally acceptable definitions of corruption and development. Attempts will, therefore, be made in this section to discuss these two concepts in the context they are used in this paper. Osoba<sup>[1]</sup> observes that corruption is:

- A form of anti-social behaviour by an individual or social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is inconsistent with established legal norms and prevailing moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for the material and spiritual well-being of all members, of society in a just and equitable manner.

Corruption, in the opinion of Osoba, denies the people their legal entitlements from government. It frustrates the government itself in taking adequate care of the people and in distributing benefits in a just and equitable manner. Since the resources of the state are appropriated by the few, government cannot impact positively on the majority of the people.

To Alex Gboyega, corruption is:

- Any decision, act or conduct that subverted the integrity of people in authority or institutions charged with promoting, defending or sustaining the democratization process thereby undermining its effectiveness in performing its assigned role.

Central to Gboyega's thesis is the notion that corruption tends to carpet the integrity of those in authority, particularly in Nigeria and weaken them in performing their official assignments, in that once their hands are soiled they become incapacitated.

Also, Odekunle<sup>[2]</sup> sees corruption as "the act of corrupting or the state of involving the mind, senses and actions and activities of individuals or groups towards primitive accumulation in society". Kwame Ninsin corroborates this with his observation that private accumulation is essentially at the root of corruption and as a form of anti-social behaviour, corruption is inimical, unethical and antithetical to the development of any nation.

Development, on the other hand, is seen as a product of human efforts aimed at manipulating available resources for the achievement of improved living standards for the people. It calls for improvement in social, economic, political, cultural psychological, physical and material welfare of the people. There must be a conducive environment for people to harness, tap and utilize the available resources for the betterment of all. In other words, development must necessarily imply an all-encompassing change in all ramifications of the lives of the people and not just a mere improvement in only one aspect. To Akin Mabogunje<sup>[3]</sup> two ideas underline the notion of development. The first relates to wealth creation for the use of the citizen, while the second is that society succeeds best in this direction if it is able to adapt and transform its own institutions and the general attitude of its people towards the attainment of this goal.

Agagu attributes the problem of development in Nigeria to corruption. According to him,

- The basic problem of development in Nigeria is the nature and orientation of the political actors as framed by the nature of the Nigerian state. The political actor, either as a ruler or an opposition member, is concerned with self-interest. He is less concerned with what constitutes the interest of the state. As a ruler, he is concerned with the survival of the system only to preserve his interest. Indeed, as a ruler, he does not serve the interest of the state, except when the state is seen as an instrument of oppression and exploitation Agagu<sup>[4]</sup>.

In Nigeria, there is the tendency to use state power for private accumulation purposes. Most politicians occupying positions are out to further their access to state resources. Owing to this, the development of the Nigerian state is stunted. Corruption undercuts the country's ability to raise revenue as it encourages tax evasion, thereby reducing the nation's ability to provide essential public infrastructure. It needs to be added that corruption is of different types. Political corruption essentially involves the use of political power to manipulate the political process and established rules of contest, value allocation, etc. This manifests itself during preparation for elections, election periods and at successions. Nigerians are manipulated with a view to rigging elections, while electoral officials are tele-guided in the discharge of their official duties. Another type of corruption is economic corruption in which Nigerians engage in sharp business practices with a view to making abnormal profits. Businessmen pervert the normal institutional regulations to their advantage. Bureaucratic corruption similarly involves the inability of the bureaucrats to adhere strictly to the rules and regulations of the state. It is an attempt by the civil servants to work against the interest of the state with the mind of benefiting themselves to the disadvantage of the public good. Judicial corruption is another form and it has to do with law enforcement and administration and dispensation of justice. Bribes are taken to release criminals from police stations and judicial officers miscarry justice with greased palms. There is also moral corruption that borders on exploitation of man by man. This has to do with the behaviour of men without any ethical consideration.

It is appropriate to examine the political economy of corruption in Nigeria.

**The political economy of corruption in Nigeria:** Richard Harris<sup>[5]</sup> opines that any genuine understanding of the problem of development in Africa requires an analytical perspective that goes beyond the boundaries of the Western social science. He, therefore, argues that the

political economy approach would provide a thorough understanding of national issues because it situates them within a conceptually global perspective (*Ibid*). Hamza Alavi<sup>[6-9]</sup> have also articulated this position.

In Nigeria, the state is the major allocator of scarce resources. In fact, nearly all economic activities are public sector driven, as all depend on the state for survival. Those in the private sector are looking up to the state for the advancement of their business ventures. Owing to this situation, there is intense struggle and stiff competition to benefit from the resources of the state. To this end, development in the Nigeria state is associated with individual personal aggrandizement and accumulation of wealth to the detriment of the state. The elite, composed of those who hold leading positions in strategic hierarchies, are thus using their offices to promote private interests. This is what Schatz Sayre<sup>[10]</sup> refers to as "private capitalism". Because of their power, organization, political skill or qualities, members of the elite are always potentially capable of exploiting their positions so as to preserve elite domination<sup>[11]</sup>.

The general belief in the country is that the state has 'strategic offices and positions' which are juicy and can be occupied or captured through the competitive process. Hence access to these offices and positions is the surest way of becoming rich. Apart from this, appointment of people into state offices and positions is seen as a means of sharing in the national cake. Therefore, appointment is well celebrated, particularly by the appointee's kinsmen, friends and old schoolmates because their own time has come to benefit from state resources. There is a symbiotic relationship between the elite appointed into positions and the masses, particularly ethnic and support groups; the elite reward support groups with bogus contracts (which mostly are unexecuted), gifts and cash far beyond what their total emoluments can support and the masses reciprocate with blind loyalty. The nature of corruption in Nigeria shows that there is a form of structured relationship between the elite and the masses, particularly of the same ethnic group in which elite are clearly predominant, with their demands regularly fulfilled.

The issue of corruption in this country reflects one of the manifestations of patrimonial state-society relations. Prebendalism in this sense refers to patterns of political behaviour which justify the notion that the offices of the existing state may be competed for and used for the personal benefits of the office-holders and other support groups (*Ibid*). Crawford Young<sup>[12]</sup> lent credence to this. According to him, there is a "tendency in Nigeria for individuals to seek support from their... kinfolk in the pursuit of the most basic of economic and political goods" (*Ibid*). To William Reno<sup>[13]</sup>, "men use their privileged position to build formidable links to... view

state office as a valuable instrument in their pursuits of private wealth".

Peter Ekeh's 'two public thesis'<sup>[14]</sup> illustrates why the problem of corruption is deep-rooted in Nigeria. He traced it to the cultural system. According to him, individuals in Africa operate within 'two publics': primordial and civil publics (*Ibid*). To him, the primordial public operates on societal morality and is bound to the private realm whereas civil public is amoral and devoid of any claim to morality (*Ibid: 23*). In view of this, individuals in Nigeria see corruption as a taboo in the primordial public and avoid it at that level. The same thing cannot be said of corruption in the civil public, as the same individuals operating in the primordial public who detest corruption openly promote it at this level. The reason for this is that they seem to believe that the state does not belong to anyone and that appointments into state positions and offices are to be used to benefit people from their primordial public. They also see it as a way of sharing in the national cake or national resources.

Nigeria has the legacy of the domination of the corrupt elite over the economy and politics. In this connection, William Reno notes, "elite struggle for resources lies in strengthening state manipulation of private economic interests"<sup>[13]</sup>. The ruling elite in an attempt to protect its class, encourages elite accumulation. The relative ease of appropriation through state agencies militates against the establishment of a strong independent economic base outside the public sector in Nigeria. This has a lot of implications for the overall development of the country.

**Historical review of corruption in Nigeria:** The Nigerian state became the center of primitive and private accumulation through preatorianism and prebendalism as highlighted above. Corruption in Nigeria is backed by the militarization of the polity and the incidence of authoritarian rule, even in a supposedly democratic system. There is obviously lack of accountability, probity, honesty and public integrity in the political system. The society itself appears to be disjointed, while there is palpable social dislocation because of the problem of corruption. Good governance takes the back seat, while development suffers because of high level of corruption in the country. Three major developments served as the springboard of corruption in the country, namely: the civil war, military incursion into politics and the discovery of crude oil.

There is grim evidence of rot in the country as manifested in the gross mismanagement of national resources before and after independence. Since the country's independence in 1960, Nigerians have had to live with endemic corruption in all facets of the national life.

**Corruption in Nigeria's first republic:** Osoba<sup>[17]</sup> traces the root of corruption to colonialism, in that colonial officers and their black collaborators presided over a fraudulent and corrupt accumulation system. This crisis of accumulation resulted in the sharpening of the contradiction between the colonialists and the ambitious up-and-coming Nigerian bourgeoisie. Even after independence, the departing colonial officials entered into partnership with the Nigerian bourgeoisie and politicians to consolidate and further enhance existing structures of accumulation based mainly on corrupt tendencies.

The Nigerians that took over from the departing British officials had more interest in behaving and acquiring wealth and status like the colonialists, which was made possible only through corrupt practices. Their new positions opened the door of accumulation through corruption. So, many First Republic politicians and office-holders helped themselves to the nation's treasury. For example, the Foster Sutton Tribunal of Enquiry of 1956 into the finances of African Continental Bank (ACB) indicted the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the then Premier of Eastern Region and one time Nigeria President for diverting a huge sum of money from the Eastern Nigerian government to the bank with a view to solving the liquidity problem of the bank and enriching himself (*Ibid*: 470). Also, the G.B.A. Coker Commission of Inquiry of 1962 into Western Nigerian Public Corporations indicted the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the leadership of Action Group (AG) for corruptly enriching themselves and the party through diversion of the fund of the Cocoa Marketing Board, which belonged to the people (*Ibid*). This was the situation all over the country during this period.

It needs to be emphasized that corruption at this period was relatively low as perpetrators were mainly located in the political class. What was generally referred to as corruption then was favouritism and '10 percent cut' on contracts awarded. In fact, the sacking of the politicians of the First Republic was as a result of this.

**Corruption under the military regimes:** The military regimes elevated corruption to an unimaginable pedestal in the Nigerian state. To Dipo Kolawole<sup>[15]</sup>, the Nigerian military successfully infested the nation with the virus of corruption. The problem of corruption during the First Republic was a child's play in comparison to what happened under the military regimes of Generals Yakubu Gowon, Ibrahim Babangida, Sani Abacha and to some extent, Murtala Mohammed, Olusegun Obasanjo and Buhari-Idiagbon. Under military rule, corruption was celebrated and reached its apogee and the country became the 'infamous' leader of the most corrupt nations. This cankerworm reached an unprecedented level like never before in the history of the country. Nigeria became

famous for inglorious corrupt practices as Nigerians gained notoriety for monumental frauds internationally.

Under Gowon's regime, so many federal commissioners and military governors were indicted for corrupt practices. The incidence of civil war assisted and promoted the issue of corruption in the country as both the military and their civilian collaborators saw the war as an opportunity to milk the country dry and unlawfully enrich themselves. This was attested to by various probe panels set up by the Mohammed/Obasanjo regime, which established many scandalous cases of corrupt and unlawful enrichment against many officials of Gowon's administration (*Ibid*). During the regime of Mohammed/Obasanjo there were cases of corrupt practices leveled and proved against the officials of the administration. But it must be quickly added that these cases were not as pronounced as what obtained under Gowon's administration.

There were reported cases of corruption under the military administration of Buhari-Idiagbon, but they were not well pronounced.

The military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida opened the floodgates of corruption in Nigeria. The regime made the issues of "settlement" and corruption matters of state policy. The president never at any time spoke against corruption. According to Osoba<sup>[1]</sup>, "Babangida and his collaborators were able to establish an original kind of military autocracy grounded in cronyism, blatant corruption of high profile individuals and groups in society".

Schooled in Machiavellian philosophy, Ibrahim Babangida introduced the settlement syndrome with a view to corrupting as many Nigerians as possible in order to pocket them and compel them into blind loyalty and affection for his elongated rule. So many Nigerians were hoodwinked and hypnotized by this syndrome, as reflected in their belief, till today, that under the regime the country was awash in money. Such Nigerians, particularly those who benefited handsomely in that kleptocratic government, are now routing for the return of Babangida to power as executive president come 2007. Under the regime, the country got heavily indebted and little of the nation's revenue was expended on development projects. In fact, some of the revenue could not be traced to any particular project; an example of this was the \$12.4 billion Gulf War oil windfall as revealed by the Pius Okigbo Panel. Babangida himself once boasted that the essence of government was to spend money. He generated the money and spent it; by implication, what he spent the money on was irrelevant.

The regimes of Babangida and Abacha were keen competitors for the top spot in the promotion of corruption in Nigeria. General Sani Abacha stole a lot of money from the economy and stashed it in foreign banks.

The differences between his regime and that of Babangida were that there was decentralization of corruption under the latter while the former centralized corruption. There were incidents of corruption in the ten-month regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar, but for keeping his promise in returning the country to democratic rule, all the corrupt practices seem to have been glossed over.

**Corruption in the Nigeria's second republic:** The period between October 1, 1979 and December 31, 1983 marked the country's second republic. This period was remarkable in the evolution of corruption in the country. What was noticeable at the period was the permeation of corruption into the civil society.

During the period, corruption was adored and the politicians occupying positions of authority in Nigeria worshipped private accumulation. Most, if not all the politicians of that era, were motivated into politics by self-interest; they saw politics as an investment and they were so desperate to recoup such investment and also make profit. Osoba<sup>[1]</sup> eloquently puts this in perspective by noting that:

- The strategy used by the politicians of the Second Republic to recoup their losses while extending and consolidating their accumulative base, amounted to the refurbishing, combining and enlarging of all the known techniques of primitive accumulation previously practised in Nigeria. These ranged from spurious and grossly inflated contracts and consultancies, import licence racketeering, the presidential task force on rice importation, a multi-billion pound sterling commodity scam with the Johnson – Mathley Bank (JMB) of London and the huge National Youth Service (NYSC) rip off ... or irrelevant and irresponsible traveling expenses to exotic and far-flung parts of the globe (*Ibid*).

**Corruption and democratic rule in Nigeria 1999-2005:**

On May 29, 1999 Nigeria made another attempt at democratic rule. On that day, the executive president and the thirty-six state governors were sworn in. Before then, there had been startling revelations about how people had corruptly enriched themselves, particularly under the previous military regimes. Under military authoritarian rule, the people appeared to be helpless in making their leaders accountable. The new democratic experience brought renewed hope to the people that their elected leaders would be more responsive and development conscious by shunning corrupt and sharp practices.

This was made manifest by President Olusegun Obasanjo at his inauguration ceremony. According to him:

- No society can grow and develop when corruption is declared to progress unfettered as it has grown into a cancer in Nigeria... government and its agencies became thoroughly corrupt and reckless. Members of the public had to bribe their way through ministries and parastats to get attention and one government agency had to bribe another government agency to obtain the release of their statutory allocation of fund<sup>[16]</sup>.

The people's belief soon turned out to be an illusion, as events since the re-enthronement of democratic rule have shown that development is still a distant hope for Nigerians. Beseating their hope is corruption, ranging from political, bureaucratic, moral and economic to socio-cultural corruption. Corruption has manifested itself in the current democratic dispensation first in form of electoral fraud. So many unqualified persons were elected into position through all forms of electoral malpractice.

Owing to this, those who assumed positions in that manner have continued to labour under a moral burden, as their legitimacy is seriously questioned. Various litigations against many of the office-holders attest to this. What made the imposition of candidates and manipulation of people possible was nothing other than corruption. As soon as money changed hands truth always took the back seat.

The problem of corruption has become more entrenched as politicians see politics as a business investment which must be recouped and yield profits. This fact accounts for the inevitability of corruption in Nigeria. Such politicians are more than determined to maintain their positions at all costs and are less concerned with the people's welfare and development; they are only concerned with their personal interests. Corruption rears its ugly head at the local government, state and federal levels. In fact, there is no tier of government that is free of this cankerworm. For example, so many local government chairmen have had allegations of corrupt practices proved against them. Majority of state government officials have also soiled their hands. For example, Chief Adebayo Adefarati, the former governor of Ondo State and some of his commissioners, particularly Bamidele Ogedengbe, were accused of corruption<sup>[17]</sup>. The governor and his kitchen cabinet were said to have purchased a building located on Plot 90, Ajose Adeogun Street, Victoria Island, Lagos, in a controversial manner. Apart from this, the price of the house was unduly inflated as they bought the house for N357, 980,200:00 but presented a receipt for N500, 010,000:00 to the state executive council (*Ibid*). This scandal shook the state to its foundation. Abubakar Audu, a former governor of Kogi State, was similarly

accused of corruptly enriching himself. In fact, he was alleged to have a number of choice properties both in Nigeria and overseas<sup>[18]</sup>.

Most governors have also been accused of siphoning their state revenues through dubious awards of contracts particularly to bogus foreign firms<sup>[19]</sup>. In fact, *Tell* magazine observed that seven of the state governors could actually buy over Nigeria (*Ibid*). All such wealth derived were from bribes, kickbacks and outright embezzlement.

Corruption at the federal level is alarming and earthshaking. Since the inauguration of the current democratic dispensation, the National Assembly has been enmeshed in one form of corruption or the other. For example, the leadership of the National Assembly under the late Dr. Chuba Okadigbo was indicted for corrupt practices taken to a ridiculous extent. Auditors' reports into the finances of the National Assembly revealed reckless financial spending, outright embezzlement of public funds and utter lack of due process, as outrageous contract awards in the assembly were not open to tender procedures. For example, the contract for the provision of street lights from the National Assembly complex to Eagles Square in Abuja was for the sum of N155 million while 100 laptop computers were bought at the cost of N5.94 million<sup>[20]</sup>. So many of the so-called honourable members were indicted for their roles in the scandal. A one-time federal permanent secretary, Julius Makanjuola, was sacked for corrupt enrichment and financial misappropriation in the Ministry of Defence. Former Senate President Anyim Pius Anyim was also accused of corruption<sup>[21]</sup>.

The late Sunday Afolabi, Hussain Akwanga and others were detained, docked and prosecuted for taken bribe while serving as federal minister and permanent secretary and in other capacities respectively. Tafa Balogun, a former Inspector General of Police, was forced to resign and he is standing trial for corruption. He was accused of fraud, money laundering and embezzlement of N13 billion while in office. The immediate past Senate President, Adolphus Wabara, was made to resign because he was accused of being the arrowhead for demanding and receiving a N55-million bribe from the equally dismissed Minister of Education, Prof. Fabian Osuji<sup>[22]</sup>. The list of big and small Nigerians' involvements in corrupt practices is endless. The question to ask at this juncture is what are the effects of all these corrupt practices on the nation's development? This shall be our next focus.

**Corruption and development in the Nigeria:** Corruption is antithetical to development and hence is impacting negatively on the Nigerian State. Despite the abundant

resources the country is endowed with, Nigeria continues to be categorized with the poorest nations of the world and this is already due to the problem of corruption. Citizens are living below the poverty line. In fact, most Nigerians are not living on up to \$1 per day. Workers salaries are poor while per capita income is very low. The industries are working below capacity utilization and frustration is boldly written on the faces of the citizens.

President Olusegun Obasanjo's observation on the issue of corruption and the problem it constitutes to development in a nationwide broadcast on the N55 million-bribery scam in the National Assembly is very instructive and important to our discussion in this section. According to the president:

- Corruption brings a nation no good. The resources meant for water supply, roads, education, health and other basic and social services that are captured and stolen by a handful of Nigerians through corrupt acts stultify development. When you encourage, cover up or join hands in such acts, you are destroying the nation and our collective future<sup>[23]</sup>.

President Obasanjo is saying the obvious. Corruption has reduced Nigeria to nothingness as virtually all infrastructure for the welfare of the people is comatose. The Nigerian elite, with their high propensity for primitive private accumulation, always divert resources budgeted for maintaining public institutions into their private pockets. This is not only causing undue and untold hardship for the people. It is equally making the nation's economy lie prostrate. Such institutions of state as the universities, the judiciary, the police, etc. are suffering owing to the problem of corruption. Corruption has led to monumental decay in infrastructure and the general collapse of living standards. In Nigeria, hospitals are mere consulting institutions, as necessary facilities to attend to patients are unavailable. The university system is a shadow of its old self, as the problems of infrastructures; instructional materials, research materials, etc confront both the teachers and students daily. The police institution is grossly under-funded as the money allocated is almost invariably misappropriated. This accounts largely for the high level of insecurity of lives and properties in the country. The functions of all these institutions of the state are suffering, as their capacities for performing their assigned functions effectively and efficiently have been unduly compromised.

The elected officials in Nigeria are serving personal interests rather than the good of the generality of the people who voted them into power. Nigeria's Minister of State for Finance, Nenadi Usman, lends credence to this. According to her:

- There is hardly anything to show for the monies the governors are collecting. Four to seven days after the Federal Account Allocation. Committee meeting, the exchange rates go up which means that the governors are using the money to buy dollars<sup>[18]</sup>.

The observation of Usman above shows that the governors are simply diverting money allocated to their states into personal accounts overseas. This practice may have accounted for the poverty and underdevelopment of the country. Between May 29, 1999 and November 2003, over N2 trillion accrued to the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory<sup>[18]</sup>. However, there are hardly any visible achievements on the ground to justify the amount. What is obvious is that most state governors and their collaborators are plundering the resources of their states to feather personal nests.

The war against corruption appears to be a one-man show. President Olusegun Obasanjo is a lone ranger in this regard. He seems to have committed his total being to the eradication of corruption in all ramifications of our social life. Though, it appears that President Obasanjo has been selective in his anti-corruption crusade as some individuals that are notorious for corrupt practices are neither probed or arrested because of their perceived strong connection with high government officials. Eradication of corruption may be a tall dream because of the non-commitment of those in positions of authority. The desired development and dividends of democracy may therefore be slow in coming in the years to come.

**Obasanjo's anti-corruption crusade:** As noted earlier, the Obasanjo administration recognized the damaging effects of corruption on the Nigerian nation and determined to confront this hydra-headed monster. To effectively do this, Obasanjo initiated the setting up of anti-corruption commissions such as Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). Apart from this, he initiated the due process mechanism in the award of contracts at the federal level.

One thing that is obvious is that the setting up of these anti-corruption commissions is a serious indictment of the Nigeria police in carrying out its assigned functions because this important institution of the state is adjudged overtly corrupt as reflected above in the case of the former Inspector General of Police.

The seeming failure of the various laws promulgated and aimed at checking corruption, ensuring accountability, probity and public integrity necessitated President Obasanjo to send to the National Assembly a bill for a law against bribery and corruption in July, 1999. It took members of the National Assembly almost a year before passing this bill into law<sup>[24]</sup>. Apart from this, the bill

was watered down because if it was passed in its original form it may not spare members of National Assembly. Despite the passage of the bill, the commission appears to be a toothless bull-dog, as its activities are affected by debilitating court injunctions. It seems the commission is unable to do much because of the 'Nigerian factor'. The Nigerian factor in this sense, has to do with the culture of sabotaging policy, institution and agencies that want to correct wrongs. The reason for this is simply to promote private accumulation.

On its part, EFCC is breaking some grounds and making meaningful impact particularly on the advanced fee fraud known as 419 in Nigeria. Not only this, the commission is confronting economic crimes and waging war against corruption particularly among the elite. There is no doubt, this agency of government is impacting seriously in the area of prevention and eradication of corruption.

## CONCLUSION

It is established in this paper that corruption is deep rooted in Nigeria and it has impacted negatively on the overall development of the Nigerian state. In this country, corruption increases the cost of administration and lowers peoples' respect for constituted authority. Corruption in government increases poverty as it weakens government and lessens its ability to fight poverty. The realization of this calls for a concerted effort by all and sundry towards the eradication of corruption. But in Nigeria, it seems as if lip service is paid to this issue, as only very few are supporting the anti-corruption crusade of President Obasanjo, thus making the war on corruption tedious, cumbersome and rigorous. What then can be done to wipe out corruption in Nigeria?

As poverty induces corruption, there is the need to fight poverty particularly among the working class by improving their salaries. Workers' salaries in Nigeria are grossly low and very embarrassing. The salaries need to be improved to support decent living. It is noted that countries with poorly paid public officials tend towards higher corruption<sup>[25]</sup>. This may explain the problem of corruption in Nigeria. Hence general working conditions must be improved upon.

Democratic ethos must be enthroned. At present there is civilian rule without democracy in Nigeria, as all known principles and attributes of democracy are not adhered to. Democracy emphasizes accountability, good governance, probity and transparency, but all these are lacking in the Nigerian democratic experience. The rulers see themselves as above the law, particularly with the immunity clause in the constitution. The immunity clause hinders the fight against corruption. Therefore, there is the need for constitutional amendment to remove it. This

will make political office holders accountable to the people. Freedom of the press is not guaranteed and the judiciary is not truly independent. Access to information will no doubt promote good governance, induce accountability and enthrone probity. Clear separation of powers and an independent judiciary will ensure checks and balances in the political system. A virile and articulate civil society is a *sine qua non* of democracy. Therefore, civil society must be empowered and strengthened to be able to serve as springboard for expanding awareness about corruption and its dangers.

Public declaration of assets by political office holders need to be encouraged, as it will provide the masses the opportunity to monitor their political leaders against private accumulation. To this end, the Code of Conduct Bureau, more than ever before, should be alive to its responsibility, while its officials must be honest and patriotic.

Also, political education must be given to our people. By this, they will be able to understand the evil of corruption and its effects on the nation and its people. With political education, the citizens will be enlightened and emboldened to courageously expose corruption. They will be discouraged from seeing corruption as a means of sharing in the national cake. The nation's value system needs to change to discourage crass materialism and promote the pursuit of excellence in all facets of lives. Hard work, diligence and honesty should be rewarded, while corruption and other vices should be seriously sanctioned.

The various bodies charged with combating and fighting corruption, such as the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and security agencies must be strengthened, empowered and rewarded accordingly. A situation whereby these institutions are cash-strapped is not encouraging in the fight against this cankerworm, as they will easily compromise their positions.

Efforts should be made at all times to ensure that only credible, reliable, dependable and honest persons are elected and appointed into positions. The current practice of anything goes cannot curtail the problem of corruption. Those with a questionable past and money should be prevented from attaining political power, lest they turn it into a means for selfish private accumulation. Politics should, as a matter of fact, be decriminalized in Nigeria by enthroning a new political recruitment culture which de-emphasizes the prohibitive costs of seeking elective office.

The fight against corruption must be total, holistic and not selective. In fact, the Obasanjo administration must demonstrate that it has enough political will to fight this monster. The fight must not be seen as being targeted at particular people. All those who do not share the

visions and aspirations of the president should be shown the way out of the government. Most importantly, corrupt persons should pay the penalty to discourage the anti-social behaviour and deter would-be perpetrators.

In summary, the problem of corruption is too serious to be unattended to urgently if we are to make progress and achieve development in Nigeria. In view of this, there is a need for changes in social behaviour among public officials<sup>[26]</sup>. Also, other Nigerians must have a behavioural reorientation. President Olusegun Obasanjo recognized this when he noted that we must take seriously the values of justice, fairness, probity, transparency and accountability as fundamental tenets<sup>[27]</sup>.

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