

## Sustaining Democratic Rule In Nigeria: The Corruption Tide

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### ABSTRACT

Democratic governance is the most popular form of government that appeals to the people because of its underlying principles which are people-centered. Seeing its successful operation in the West, many developing countries including Nigeria adopts it in the 1960s. However, sustaining this hard-earned democracy has been a very big hurdle due to corruption. Corruption has been the major cog on the wheels of democratic rule in Nigeria. Suffice it to say that democracy in the First, Second and Third Republic collapsed due to widespread official corruption among the ruling class. It is ostensibly believed among the ruling class that Nigeria is now in a democratic dispensation but corruption has robbed the citizens of democratic benefits. This has thrown the political system into legitimacy crises. Hence, corruption has been identified as the major threat to sustainable democratic rule because it has become more endemic and prevalent among not only the leaders but also the followers. Using secondary data, the paper examines the negative relationship between democracy and corruption; by so doing, it reflects on the various manifestations and classification of corruption; it further examines the effects of corruption on democratic governance and posits that despite several efforts of government in fighting corruption, the scourge is still prevalent, even more in the public institutions that should enhance the successful crusade, because of lack of genuine political-will to combat corruption. The paper therefore, recommends genuine political-will, especially on the part of the government to take proactive steps in fighting corruption; exemplary leadership style; intensifying anti-corruption studies at all educational levels among others as ways of ensuring corrupt-free sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *corruption, democracy, governance, government, politics*

### INTRODUCTION

Democratic governance is the most desirable and widely emphasized form of governance globally. This is because the ideals of democratic principles are people-centered. They are based on the wills of the people and they are best suited for allowing all people have access to freedom and dignity. These basic values that were linked to democracy inform the extraordinary expansion of democratic governance to become a global form of government which can be traced back to post World War II. To this ends, the efforts of Late President Franklin Roosevelt of USA cannot be overemphasized. And since then America has been intensifying her crusade of globalizing democracy. Seeing its successful operation in the West, a number of developing countries fought for and consequently attained liberation in the mid 20th century. Nigeria is not an exception; it gained a political liberation in 1960. But sustaining this hard-earned democracy in Nigeria has been faced with numerous hurdles.

An historical excursion into Nigerian political experiment since independence reveals that democracy has been in a state of bizarre aggravated by military incursion into politics and

their misrule of Nigeria for 29 years out of her 53 years of independence. It was corrupt practices among other features of bad leadership among politicians that led to the seizures of government by the military and immediate collapse of the First, Second and even Third Republic. Democratic experiment that was carried out called the Second Republic failed as a result of widespread corrupt practices which the military (Buhari Regime) blame Shagari's administration for. Corruption had in the past been adduced by the military as an excuse to seize power from the civilians because official corrupt practices have been linked to democracy. However, many analysts have argued that the worst civilian democratic government is better than the best military regime.

In realization of the above fact, the then military Head of State General Abdulsalami Abubakar lifted the ban on political activities, which led to the emergence of another political dispensation in Nigeria. The election of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo under the banner of the Peoples Democratic Party in May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009 marked the beginning of the fourth republic. Since then, democratic governance has continued to strive in Nigeria, but with little or nothing to show for it. It has only succeeded in bringing a lot of hardship to the masses which constitute the majority in Nigeria. From 2009 to date, the rate of poverty, unemployment, ethno-religious crises, crime, insecurity, corruption, mismanagement of resources has continued to rise. No wonder, many have advocated for the return of military rule in Nigeria. However, out of these numerous vices among others, corruption has been single out as the ban of democratic governance in the country. This indeed seems to have a devastating effect on the sustainability of democratic rule in Nigeria. Only recently, the president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan was confronted on this fact, which he out-rightly denied. To him, corruption is not the major problem in Nigeria, and that the issue of corruption was been over exaggerated (Vanguard online Newspaper, 2013.). His conclusion has however, drawn criticism from many critics, commentators and observers and that he is been economical with the truth.

Many writers and political commentators have identified all forms of corrupt practices as a major threat to the sustenance of democratic governance and economic development in Nigeria (Polgreen, 2006; Kari, 2013; Adejumo, 2002; Ikelegbe, 1995 and Etakibuebu, 2013). The vices of corruption seem to permeate the electioneering processes from the party level to other levels of electioneering in Nigeria. The question is what are the vices and manifestations of corruption as it relate to democracy in Nigeria? What are the effects on good governance and the sustenance of democratic rule in Nigeria?

The paper establishes the nexus between corruption and democracy by examining the manifestations and magnitude of corruption as well as its consequences on democratic governance in Nigeria. The research work is more of qualitative study, it therefore draws its data from secondary sources i.e. relevant government documents and publications, newspapers and magazines, journals and conference proceedings among others. In view of this fact, the data were analysed using the content analysis. The study focuses on the events or happenings as it relate to the subject matter from the beginning of the fourth republic in 1999 to 2013.

### **CONCEPTUAL ISSUES**

Before getting into the discussion properly, it is pertinent to have a conceptual understanding of the concepts. It is pertinent because as E.E Schattschneider posits, '...it is difficult to see things that are undefined' (See Ikelegbe, 1995). Hence a clear definition will guide us in this discussion.

## The Concept of Democracy

Democracy is one of the nebulous concepts in the social and political sciences that defy single and most acceptable definition from an individual or a particular group. For example, Dahl (1976:5) views democracy as a “political system in which the opportunity to participate in decision making is widely shared among adult citizens”. To Joseph Schumpeter, democracy is a system “for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Kaur, 2002). Dahl talks of the conception of ‘Poliarchy’ which has two overt dimensions; on one hand is **opposition** which involves organized contestation through regular free and fair elections, and on the other hand is **participation**, which he explained as the right of virtually all adults to vote and contest for office. In addition, the civil liberty is another important and perhaps, the third dimension. (Samuel, 2011:15, Kaur, 2002:2).

Etymologically, the word democracy was derived from two Greek words: *Demos* (people) and *Kratos* (to rule), meaning people. Hence, democracy can be simply defined as government by people, and this is the areas that pose the greatest challenge. Any kind of government is rule by the people, but the big question here is: what do we mean by ‘the people’? On this, Kaur (2002) argues that “there is not and there has never been a State or City where ‘the people’ means every individual in the state or City. “Even in the Athenian City, direct democracy did not mean that every person in the City had the right to participate in decision-making”.

Because of the complexities in identifying what ‘the people’ is, we suggest two divisions of ‘the people’ based on governance. Thus, we have the rulers and the ruled or the leaders and the led. Participation of ‘the people’ whichever divides one belongs is determined by some factors which can be dissociated into social and economic. However, Scholars have agreed that democracy is a form of government in which power is derived from the people (the led). This goes without saying that democratic governance lies upon the consent of the governed, a requirement that makes election system (which determine how the citizens can make their choice or preferences known) a crucial element.

In general, democracy is people-centered governance and thus, the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United State of America, Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) defined democracy as the government of the people by the people and for the people (Procter, 1978, in Ololobou, 2004). Kari (2013) observes that democracy is a set of principles and practices evolved and operated by a people and therefore underscores the fundamental principles upon which democracies rest. These principles are essentially the same or substantially similar everywhere. The commonest of these principles are freedom, equality, mass participation, choice among others. This denotes a process of governance which allows a broad mass of people to choose their leaders and in turn guarantees them a broad range of civil rights and dividends. As enumerated by Agbo (2008:6), the future of Nigeria’s democracy clearly depends on the development of a competent electoral system that would power it, as in advanced democracies like Britain and United State of America. To him, such a system should be rugged and dynamic enough to withstand the complexities of the federation and fair enough to address the peculiarities of Nigeria’s many people. Such a system would give hope to the minorities and offer assurance to the majority that Nigeria is a commonwealth of all stakeholders. In the emerging system, the majority of eligible voters would be eager to vote because they would have confidence in the electoral system and know their votes are important. All these rest upon good governance.

The World Bank, cited in Edegbo (20 04) defines governance as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development”.

True democracy rest on good governance and the major determinant of whether governance is a good or bad is not only on effective policy formulation but also on how the policy brought about growth, stability and more importantly on the over- all well-being of the citizens. The United Nations (1971) underscores the basic characteristics of good governance particularly under a democratic dispensation, which include but not limited to participation, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and justice, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision (see Wadak and Jatau, 2009:2).

Democratic governance started taking shape in Nigeria since 1999, when the military was disengaged from the polity to institutionalize democracy. Ostensibly, democracy was apparently institutionalized and Nigerians expressed a sigh of relief and freedom from the totalitarian and dictatorial military rule for decades, but sustaining this hard –earned democracy has since been bedeviled by a hydra-headed political culture of graft and corruption in its multidimensional complexities. Corruption is essentially the major obstacle to social, political and economic progress of any society and it is apparent that the culture of graft has further accentuated the socio – economic and political down turn of the Nigerians society.

### **Corruption**

The term corruption has become a familiar ‘term’ in Nigeria. It is now a common phenomenon which rears its ugly head in every community and institutions. Hence, the concept has received different interpretations from different people especially among social scientist in the academic community. The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines corruption as dishonestly i.e. using one’s position or power to one’s own advantage, especially for money and other gratifying benefits.

In the perception of Nye (1967), corruption is a behavior which violates rules against the exercise of certain types of duties for private gains-regarding influences. In the same vein, it is seen as a behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role, because of private gain such as personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or status gains (Adeleye, 2013). The more you look at the concept of corruption the more elusive it becomes because of its manifestations. Corruption involves asking, giving or taking a free gift, or favour in exchange of an illegitimate task, hoarding, collusive price fixing, smuggling, transfer-pricing, inflation of prices, election rigging, illegal foreign exchange transactions, illegal but obviously unfair and unjust acquisition of public, corporate or other persons’ money or properties to direct or indirect personal use (Odekunle, 1982). Still on the concept of corruption, Ribadu (2009:38) submits that “the corruption endemic to our region is not just bribery, but about mismanagement, incompetence, abuse of office and the inability to establish justice and the rule of law”. Corruption is a central complex issue across the globe and manifest in many forms. This was captured in Article 4 Section 1 (a-i) of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption as follows:

- 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, favor, 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;
- 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 of his or her public functions;
- The offering or granting, directly to a public official or any other person for the purpose of illicitly obtaining benefits for himself or herself or for a third party;

- The diversion by a public official or any other person, for purpose unrelated to those for which they were intended, for his own or her own benefit or that of a third part, 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;
- The offering or giving, promising, solicitation or acceptance, directly or indirectly, of any undue advantage to or by any person, who directs or work for in any capacity, a private sector or 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;
- 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 is exerted or whether or not the supposed influence leads to the intended result;
- Illicit enrichment;
- The use or concealment of proceeds derived from any of the acts referred to in this Article;
- 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 Articles (see Aleyomi, 2013:5-7).

A close look at the above extensive definitions by the article referred to emphasized on official corruption. Hence most people commonly referred to corruption as the perversion of public affairs for private advantages. It is an act of requesting, offering, giving or accepting directly or indirectly a bribe or taking any undue advantage which distorts the proper performance of duty or behaviour required of recipient (Anti -Corrupt Act, 2003). Most of these definitions are subjective and self-limiting; but still some are all encompassing. Thus, scholars went further to give a clearer understanding of corruption by classifying it base on the various ways it manifests.

Dike (2005), classifies corruption into three major classes: Political corruption (Grand), bureaucratic or petty corruption and electoral corruption. However, Otite (2000) in Aleyomi (2013) and Keyamo (2008) further classifies corruption into five types; political corruption, economic corruption, bureaucratic corruption, judicial corruption, moral corruption. These are briefly explained bellow:

- Political Corruption: This type of corruption manifest itself in at least two ways: (1) activities connected to election and succession, (2) manipulation of people and institutions in order to retain power and office. 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 (Aleyomi, 2013). More so, political corruption involves the use of public resources for the interest of primordial public realm, for instance, his ethnic group (Samuel, 2011). Anyone who is schemed out of any appointment in Nigeria today readily falls back on ethnicity as an excuse for that disqualification. As a result, public officers are usually urged by “his people” to make the best use of “his time” to satisfy himself and “his people” since it is “their turn” (Keyamo, 2009:15). All these amounts to political

corruption. Political corruption also manifest as electoral corruption such as manipulation of voters registration process, ballot snatching, election rigging, etc.

- Economic Corruption: Corruption in the economic and business world has become a 'norm' in Nigeria, negatively though. It is a well known fact that businessmen and wealthy elites dislike obstacles of profit making. They tend to employ unconventional means to distort the normal institutional or bureaucratic processes and regulations. Like the 16th century Machiavellian theory of the end justifies the means, no matter how mean or despicable the means is, to most wealthy people and Nigerian businessmen in particular, the end is what really matters (Kalu, 2010:26). Economic corruption involves bribery- a payment (either in cash or in kind) that is taken or given in a sordid relationship. Aleyomi (2013) identifies some metaphorical allusions this kind of corruption is called- "Kickbacks", "gratuities", "pay off", "sweeteners", "greasing", "long leg", "bottom-power", "Chop I chop", "Scratch my back", and so on. Besides, Aleyomi adds, fraud is another heinous form of corruption which manifests in some kinds of trickery, swindling, deceit, counterfeiting, racketing, smuggling and forgery which go with the allusion "419". Others are money laundering, looted fund, misappropriation of public funds, embezzlement etc.
- Bureaucratic Corruption: This form of corruption is being perpetuated by public servants who implement government economic, political and social policies. This is apparent in governmental Ministries, Departments and Agencies where bureaucrats and some other privilege staff in the record units use their power or privilege positions to perpetuate all kinds of corrupt vices in the process of performing their statutory duties. For instance, many customers are made to bribe their ways before accessing public goods and services. Tax administration lacks transparency and that has led either to high levels of tax evasion or avoidance, tax officials demanding bribes in return for lower tax rates. These have great consequences for effective service delivery (see Asaju, Adagba and Anyio, 2013: 1-6)
- Moral Corruption: Anything that is morally bad is corruption; any human behavior which involves the exploitation of man by man, the powerless by the powerful (wealthy) and some sleazebags who resort to sleaze in order to protect their power, or protect their interest is moral corruption. Public officials and some wealthy elites flaunt their social grandeur at the expense of massive poverty and they 'care no damn'. Public/political operators have separated legal rules from moral rules, hence they "care no damn" if they are morally bankrupt while 'legacy okay'.
- Judicial Corruption: This involves perversion of justice by the court of law and other law enforcement agencies (i.e. Judges, Lawyers and legislators etc). The Judiciary is not just "a custodian of people's fundamental right" (Lyman, 2005) but also a guardian of the constitution. But when judges are bought over with bribes to overturn justice which they ought to defend, it is corruption. The way the case of the suspension of Justice Lekan Salami was handled by the Judiciary in collaboration with the federal government is a case in question and this constitutes a big minus to the integrity of Nigerian judiciary as an unbiased umpire.

For instance the police are to be the "*Koboko*" that Government uses to flog corrupt individuals but "they are perceived to be one of the most corrupt institutions in Nigeria, and "X squad, the disciplinary body responsible for investigating corruption inside the police is reportedly corrupt themselves as well" (Wikipedia, 2013).

The above forms and manifestation of corruption are intertwined and they all have direct bearing and effect on democratic rule and good governance in Nigeria.

### FACTORS THAT BREAD CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA.

There are many factors that further bread corruption in Nigeria. Some of them are discussed below;

- Weak Governmental Institutions. Corruption persist in Nigeria democracy because of lack of strong and well developed democratic institutions such as Independent National Electoral Commission( INEC), the Legislature, Judiciary, the Police and other anti-corruption agencies. It is a settled fact that institutional weakness is a bane to sustainable democratic rule and its attendant development. This is because, on the contrast, strong institutions are “the guardians of the will of society and place limits to acceptable behaviours “(Babalola, 2010). Where governmental institutions are strong, people (the powerfulls) cannot substitute the goals or wills of the larger society with their immediate personal interest.
- There is obvious lack of sincere fight against corruption by government officials. There is no genuine political will to really nip the scourge in the bud, especially when the anti-corruption bills are being sent to the National Assembly. This is exemplified in the body language of the president, members of the National Assembly and the other public officials. These corrupt officials who are at the helm of affairs will do everything possible to thwart justice through deliberate under-funding of the anti-corruption agencies (eg EFCC & ICPC). Some of these corrupt individuals are more powerful, richer and influential than the anti-corruption agencies. More so, any bill that has the coloration of fighting corruption in any dimension will not see the light of the day in the National Assembly because almost all the member of the National Assembly and their godfathers will become culprits if such bill becomes law.
- The culture of impunity. This is yet another major obstacle militating against the anti-corruption crusade. In the international law of human rights, impunity refers to the failure to bring perpetrators of human right violation to justice and, as such, itself constitute a denial of victims’ right to justice and redress (Wikipedia, 2013). According the same source, impunity is especially common in countries that lack a tradition of the rule of law, suffer from corruption or that have entrenched systems of patronage, or where the judiciary is weak or members of the security forces are protected by special jurisdictions or immunities. The amended Set of Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights through Action to Combat Impunity, definition of impurity gives us a clear understanding of the culture of impunity in Nigeria. This document submitted to the United Nation Commission on Human Right in 2005 defines impunity as;

*“the impossibility, de jure or de facto, of bringing the perpetrators of violations to account – weather in criminal, civil, administrative or disciplinary proceedings –since they are not subject to any injury that might lead to their being accused, arrested, tried, and if found guilty, sentenced to appropriate penalties, and to making reparation to their victims.”*

The document further states in the first principle that

*“impunity arise from a failure by states to meet their obligations to investigate violations; to take appropriate measures in respect of the perpetrators, particularly in area of justice, by ensuring that those suspected of criminal responsibility are prosecuted, tried and duly punished; to provide victims with effective remedies and to ensure that they receive reparation for injuries suffered; to ensure the inalienable*

*right to know the truth about violations; and to take other necessary steps to prevent a recurrence of violations.” (Wikipedia, 2013)*

The above definition clearly depicts how impunity challenges the task of combating corruption in Nigeria. The various institutions of government that are saddled with the responsibility of prosecuting and punishing corrupt officials are perpetuating impunity by enabling violators and criminals go scot free.

- Another Critical challenge in the fight against corruption is the fact that the people (especially the less privileged) who are the victims of impunity and corruption have accepted corruption as a “norm”. The people has been systematically desensitized to take their rights as favours or privileges from their rulers, and this explains why they prefer to vote for somebody who can bring more *favours* from the national cake, by stealing much public funds to at least give them some preconceived favours.

It is this expectation of access to undue favours and patronage, couple with the perverted and highly corrupt electoral process that explain why looters and plunders of state resources find their ways into public offices. The less privileged people in the society have given up on the electoral system and other democratic institutions which have not been fair to them and may never function fairly in accordance with the ideals of a democratic society.

The Nigeria political and bureaucratic system is characterized with high level secrecy. The governed hardly have access to public information despite the passage of Freedom of Information Bill into Law, there are so Many governmental institutions, agencies and organizations that have refused to implement the Act. There is need for relative openness and adequate communication between the leaders and led if democracy must survive.

There is also deliberate frustration of investigation process by the powerful and those in position of authorities who use their connections in government to thwart judicial and investigation process.

The above factors among others further breed and further worsened the corruption tide in Nigeria.

### **EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION ON NIGERIA DEMOCRACY**

At every epoch and in all climes, the extent of evils of corruption on social, economic and political structures cannot be overemphasized. From the Athenian democracy to the modern democracy, we understood that democratic governance is the government of the people, by the people and for the people, which was the submission of Abraham Lincoln. This informs the popular notion of mass (people) participation in a democratic dispensation. From the discussion so far, it can be deduced that corruption is widespread in Nigeria and has eaten deep in to the fabric of the society.

The pertinent question is that, if the people are corrupt, how can we have a real, true and sustainable democracy? No wonder the dividends of democracy have eluded Nigerian citizens over the years. As Kalu (2010) rightly observed, “when leaders emerge, particularly in a true democracy they emerge from among the people. They share the aches, the pains, the passions the hopes, and aspiration of the people. They get in to offices by instrumentality of the votes of the people”. But when the electoral process become defective and corrupt as it is in Nigeria today leaders will only pretend to represent the people with whom they have no connection or relationship.



As a result of this disconnection of the ruling class from the led, there is obvious lack of trust and apathy as a result of long term corruption among public officials. A government is considered legitimate if the people to whom its orders are directed to believe that the structures, procedures, acts, decisions, policies of officials or leaders of government poses the quality of rightness, propriety or moral goodness to make binding rules. The people feel that a government is just or unjust, legitimate or illegitimate, not only how it came to power, but more importantly, by what it does (Ikelegbe, 1995). He further posits that if the government actions, inactions or omissions violate the people's basic value they may conclude as St. Augustine did in his book, *"The city of God"* that "a government without justice is a great robbery" (Ikelegbe, 1995). All these induce lack of trust and legitimacy crises; hamper democratization process in Nigeria (Aleyomi, 2013).

In 2000, the Afro barometer Public Opinion Survey reported that 84 per cent Nigerians were satisfied with the state of new democracy. But six years later (i.e. in 2006) the same survey found that just 25 percent of Nigerians felt that way. I supposed that the other 75 percent were not happy with the way their hard-earned democracy is being run. Public analysts, political commentators and experts would agree with me those seven years after the last report, a considerable percentage of Nigeria still feel that the government is everything in Nigeria except democratic.

No doubt that new democracy naturally suffer from letdown of high expectations, even the U.S. which has been hitherto used as model for democracy suffer same. For instance, according to a survey in the U.S., 61 percent of Americans believe that the federal Government lacks the consent of the governed, while 18 percent remain uncertain. Similarly, most American expressed through an opinion poll conducted in the U.S. that only 21 percent of American people still believe that congress has the consent of the people. (Kalu, 2010:26) This is what we see all over the world, but sadly the situation in Nigeria is unparalleled even on the continent.

Corruption has succeeded in destroying the political institutions which are essential for the continuance of democracy. Almost all the public institutions reported as corrupt are the institutions which theorists and scholars believed to be the essential factors for sustaining democratic rules (Kaur, 2002).

Corruption in the electoral process has paved ways for wrong persons to get elected into the public offices. Electoral corruption as you know include but not limited to purchase of vote with money, promises of office or special favors, coercion, intimidation, and interference with freedom of election. Nigeria is a good example of electorally corrupt society, where greedy politician kill their own people in the name of election, losers end up as the winner through the same corrupt process, and vote are turn up in areas where votes were not cast (Aleyomi, 2013).

This paper cannot exhaust the incalculable harms and damages corruption has done and is still doing, and may continue to do on the democratic structures that should ensure it sustenance. Corruption is responsible for the failure of first, second, and third republic and if care is not taken to fight it headlong this fourth republic may also follow suit. Greedy politicians and bureaucrats are literally killing their own people by stealing the money for healthcare, for schools, for clean water, for safe road, and for virtually everything the state should provide for its people (Polgreen, 2006), and so, it is really not difficult to establish a relationship between the penchant of a leader for wealth and the state of corruption and poverty under such a leadership (Kari, 2013). We have allowed governance to be so debased by money, graft,

indolence and impunity. Polgreen (2006), Kalu (2006) and Kari, (2013) rightly observed the unnecessarily expensive political system that rewards executive power and does little to curb corruption in Nigeria. Our democracy encourages waste, pilfering and squander-mania. Governors get a check each month that represent their state cut of the fortune from oil resources and there is almost no one to answer how they spend the money.

The political class is selfish, self-seeking unpatriotic, manipulative and is capable of any vice-including engaging in dangerous intrigues capable of destroying the country itself, Kari (2013) warns. Such a class always thinks and plots for the next election rather than thinking of how to address some critical developmental issues. For instance, as 2015 election draws nearer, the wave of factionalization across political parties is now overheating the polity and violence sparking. Attention is now being shifted from addressing the teething and mounting problems, to quasi factions caused by desperate and self-seeking politicians who engage in fierce, do-or-die contest for power which gives them access to loot and inflict more pain on their constituents.

### **COMBATING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA**

Tackling corruption for sustainable democracy is an arduous global task because it retards growth and development irrespective of any society once allowed to persist. Government effort in fighting corruption since independent in Nigeria does not seem to yield any lasting result. Every successive administration both civilian and the military have attempted to fight corruption through laws, decrees and agencies. For instance, in the last decade, several agencies such as NAFDAC, Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON), the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligent Unit, otherwise known as “Due Process” emerged; above all, we have the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) which were also established and directly positioned to attack and fight corruption in its entirety. Prior to this period, there were several programmes introduced by the government to combat corruption, namely: the Jaji Declaration in 1978, the Ethical Revolution in 1982, War Against Indiscipline (WAI) in 1984, Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self-Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) in 1987, now National Orientation Agency (NOA) and War Against Indiscipline and Corruption in 1994.

All these agencies and programmes have achieved just but a little in the fight against corruption but their little success could not last due to some problems, principal among which is lack of genuine political-will to genuinely fight corruption. There is no strong political-will to put the right things in their right order; Reason? How can corrupt leaders fight corruption? Hence, the powers that be have continued to colonize the operations of the anti-corruption agencies. This attitude of successive government/administration has been criticized severally, but unfortunately our leaders ‘care no damn’. And this is hazardous to the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The damages of corruption on Nigeria democracy cannot be overemphasized. It is a very serious issue that must receive serious attention from all stakeholders in the Nigerian project if we must sustain our democracy.

In the light of the above, the paper recommends that, the government must recognize corruption as a central and cardinal issue affecting the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria and should demonstrate genuine political-will to combat it head-on in all its ramifications. This can be achieved by good governance through exemplary leadership

style, by practically demonstrate transparency and accountability, uphold honesty and integrity.

There is urgent need for the anti-corruption agencies especially the EFCC and ICPC to be genuinely empowered to be independent of the executive powers. This would enable them to take proactive actions without waiting for the body language of the president or any other persons before launching into investigation and prosecution of crimes. The agency must ensure that there is no sacred cow in the fight against corruption.

There is need for urgent cleansing of the selection process through the instrumentality of our laws. The electoral institutions should be empowered to enforce the positive measures outlined in the Electoral Act. The laws we have, though there are some flaws but are not totally bad, are not meant for fashion, they must be invoked to punish corruption culprits whether small or mighty. Corruption is on the rise due to the current culture of impunity which gives public officials the feeling that they can get away with crimes. They must be tackled with maximum possible force of law.

There is urgent need for attitudinal change. An average Nigerian does not really believe in waiting for things to be done in the right way .They believe everybody is corrupt and the only way to get what they want is to cut corners. Hence, there is need for people to painstakingly change the paradigm of "*am in a hurry* ". This cannot come by mere wishes for change. Attitudinal change comes when people take concerted effort to change. It comes when people are made to know that you cannot get away with crime , not even with simple misdemeanor saying breaking traffic rules whether high and mighty or low and simple . Attitudinal change comes when they see leaders doing what is right – leadership by example.

More so, time has come to reconsider, Value education and intensifies anti-corruption studies at all level of our educational institutions—formal and informal, backed up with material and curricula support from all stake-holders in the Nigerian project. Hence, there is need for concerted effort by NGO'S, Civil Society Organization and the media.

In addition , there is need to intensify political socialization that would equip the people with adequate knowledge of good governance and the role they can play to enthrone good governance where is absence in their community knowledge is empowered , hence , the knowledge of their democratic rights will empower them to rise up to the challenge of demanding accountability from their elected representatives and leaders , whom they have the power to call—back or over thrown if their performance do not meet their expectations . This can be achieved through the instrumentality of vote of no - confidence.

The need to redesign public procurement process to reduce the propensity to commit fraud and other financial crime. The process should also provide quick access to catch those who cannot be easily tracked. The current cashless banking and e-payment process is a right step to the right direction, only if it is properly implemented.

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