Governance and corruption in Nigeria: A philo-psychological analysis

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ABSTRACT

The menace of corruption in Nigeria is very pervasive with global implications. So pervasive is corruption in Nigeria that almost every aspect of national life is affected one way or the other. The present magnitude of corruption in Nigeria can be traceable to the many years of military rule where due process was not observed in public procurement and contract bidding. Both private and public sectors of the country are affected by various forms of corruption. As a consequence, the impact of governance in the country is impeded and if a check is not put in place, Nigeria will be left behind in the development agenda of world bodies. It is a trite fact that corruption in one place is connected to others, and enabled by systems of weak regulations and poor oversight. Human societies have been known to be bedeviled by corruption but some have been able to combat this menace by putting statutes in place to criminalize corruption and ensure that enforcement mechanism are enabled to act. This paper, therefore, explores public and private sector governance in Nigeria with a view to exposing the various forms of corruption in the country. The position taken in the paper is that corruption plays a dominant role in the development deficit in the country and examined the philosophical and psychological reasons for corruption. Also, x-rayed is the devastating effects of corruption which include underdevelopment, negative image of the country, and impact on the global market. The paper was concluded by questioning the existing anti-corruption strategies in the country and proposing the way they can be made to work.

Keywords: Governance, corruption and analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a very complex issue, and it is an endemic and socio-economic problem in Nigeria. Its roots can be found deep in the bureaucratic, corporate and political institutions. Its effects and manifestation vary from one country to another. Corruption has no border restriction, but in many developing economies it is done with impunity. This is because the developed economies seem to have somehow evolved statutory and socio-economic mechanisms to curb and control corruption to the barest minimum. Again, there appears to be the cultural and political platforms that make corruption unattractive in the developed economies. However, in the developing economies, the motivation to earn income through corrupt practices seems to be very strong as this is aggravated by poverty, compounded by low salaries and wages both in the public and private sectors. Indeed, the problem of corruption lies at the point of interaction between the public and private sectors. Corruption violates public trust and corrodes social capital as it breeds underdevelopment in every sector of our national life. Corruption has the potency of slowly eroding political legitimacy and credibility, and once these are lost, they are very difficult to regain. The unethical diversion of scarce resources by corrupt persons that
HISTORY OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Historically, it is difficult to provide the exact date that corruption became a subject of national discourse in Nigeria. This difficulty stems from two important facts: corruption is as old as society, and the complex nature of the evolution of the Nigerian state. However, Faseke (2006:103) traced the festering corruption within the civil service and its consequent hindrance to performance of its bureaucratic function in the nation, to the British colonial legacy inherited by Nigeria. He posits that the transformation of the civil service from an instrument of exploitation in the colonial era to one of corruption and fraud in post-interdependence period, especially under military rule that created job insecurity, marked the origin of office corruption in Nigeria.

From this, it is clear that the civil service was structured for exploitative purposes; so, it became an easy tool of corruption during the post-colonial epoch. This can be seen in the social distance that existed between the senior civil servants and their subordinates on the one hand, as well as the senior civil servants and members of the public on the other hand (Faseke, 2006). This social disparity conferred on the senior civil servants a high class status distinct from the rest of the civil servants, and this had spiral negative effects on the Nigerian civil service. And these senior civil servants until the 1950s were mostly Europeans and they had cars, houses and other remarkable incentives that became the hallmarks of the senior civil service and to which the rest were denied. It was on the basis of this that civil servants in the middle and lower income cadres struggled and rushed for university degrees. The impatient ones among them resorted to cutting corners in a bid to get rich quickly. So, under the guise of venting their anger on the British for dominating Nigerians in their fatherland, civil servants at the middle and lower cadres connived to hide files in a bid to force members of the public to pay before files could be found and treated speedily. This had negative consequences on the civil service inherited at independence and laid the foundation for corruption in public life in Nigeria.

The history of government, especially the military government, in Nigeria has been, according to Faseke (2006), a case of sheer “banditry and brigandage of stupendous proportion” that deepened the issue of corruption due largely to the conniving role of many of the top civil servants, which was played in concert with the military. Military rule coincided with the oil boom of the 1970s, which paved way for large public works and construction, which were unparalleled in the socio-economic development of Nigeria. What provided the impetus for the large scale construction was the rehabilitation and reconstruction policy of the General Yakubu Gowon’s regime just after the end of the civil war. The inexperience of the military in politics and administration compelled the military regime to lean more on the civil service. This situation further bolstered the power of the civil servants during the military era. It was on the basis of this that The Nigerian Opinion Magazine in 1972 as quoted by Faseke asserted that “Nigeria was being governed by a military-bureaucratic complex”.

As a result of this, considerable mismanagement was occasioned through a process whereby the higher senior civil servants served both as chairmen and key board members of public enterprises under their supervision. This dubious practice of transferring civil servants attitudes and practices to industrial and commercial concerns was worsened by the fact that some Permanent Secretaries served in as much as four boards at the
same time with the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Finance having the record of being on more than fifty boards at the same time (Allison, 1973). This according to Daily Times of may 31, 1974, led to the production of a new class of indigenous mandarins.

Also, during the General Babangida’s regime, the Sunday Concord of December 13, 1992 reported that “the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing has sacked sixty nine members of the workforce including a deputy director for alleged malpractices.” The Minister reported that “the malpractices ranged from issuance of fake authority to impersonation; payment of salaries to ghost workers, to outright theft of government funds and property”.

To this day, impunity, stealing, large scale fraud, bribery and corruption including other forms of malpractices have eaten deep into the civil service and the fabric of the Nigerian society. This can be seen in the large scale fraud perpetrated and perpetuated by the present civilian governments in the various states in Nigeria. These corrupt practices have permeated the entire spectrum of the Nigerian system. Indeed, the military, it has been argued, institutionalized corruption in Nigeria. Of course, the civilian government from 1999 to date has carried on with corrupt practices in diverse ways. The depth of corruption as a social ill can be seen in the huge budgets by the three tiers of government without a corresponding development of infrastructures and social services such as education, health, electricity, portable water and transportation.

The worst scenario is the involvement of the legislative arm of government and the judiciary in corrupt practices. This can be seen in a statement credited to General Ishola Williams of Transparency International when he complained that “judges are using the tribunals to make money. All those who have gone through election tribunals are multi-millionaires today” (The Nation, June 20, 2010).

**COMMON FORMS OF CORRUPTION**

In order to establish the reasons why corruption persists in Nigeria, it is necessary to look at how wide spread it is in the country. Corruption is a very complex phenomenon that affects society or a country in diverse ways. These effects of corruption are however dependent on the forms of corruption that are prevalent in a given society or country. Therefore, as there are several effects of corruption, so are there several forms of corruption. It was as a result of this that in the 1980s, General Ibrahim Babangida’s Political Bureau provided a broad characterization of corruption in Nigeria. According to the Bureau, corruption “… pervades all strata of the society; from the highest level of the political and business elites to the ordinary person in the village.”

The declaration above graphically presents the broad spectrum of corruption as a systemic and unethical conduct, which we can categorize as political corruption, judicial corruption, rigging, contract inflation and kickbacks, bribery, fraud of diverse kinds, embezzlement, nepotism and cronyism. We can look at these common forms of corruption, one after the other in details.

**Political corruption**

Political corruption is one of the common forms of corruption that occurs in almost every country. This involves applying unethical and illegal means within the political system, structural or institutional. Within the political realm, corruption undermines democracy and good governance through the flouting or even subverting of formal processes. Political corruption can easily be seen during elections in Nigeria. This occurs through vote rigging, which is achieved by multiple thumb-printing, stuffing of ballot boxes, falsification of results among others. Electoral fraud is indeed one of the greatest challenges in Nigeria.

In fact, electoral fraud destroys and denies the government legitimacy. It hampers mass participation of the people in the electoral processes. This can be seen in the general apathy shown by Nigerians in the 1993, 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections. People refused to go out to vote because of the firm belief that votes will not count. It was therefore on the basis of this that the “one man, one vote” and “votes must count” slogans became a selling political campaign strategy in the 2011 general elections. However, whenever there is an absence of these basic principles of democracy that also recognize the sanctity of the “human person” and the protection of his rights, the result will be conflict, distrust, disunity, selfishness, dishonesty, injustice and underdevelopment. These happen because the politicians owe the people no commitment hence the looting of public treasury. Faseke (2010) puts it thus:

> From the time of our independence in 1960, this mindless looting of state treasury has developed into a system with pattern and purpose. It has become an institution with a soul… curiously that era provided the country with some proven cases of corrupt enrichment of public officers. Nigeria’s first panel of inquiry set up to look into a case of corruption in public life was that which investigated the African Continental Bank – Nnamdi Azikiwe Affair… Incidences of widespread corruption were uncovered in 1967 when another commission of enquiry was instituted to investigate assets of 15 public officers in the defunct mid-western region…

So, even before the usurpation of political power in
January, 1966 by the military, a culture of corruption had already been widespread, though not so brazen among the political class. The subsequent military juntas that seized power always cited corruption as a reason for their intervention. However, military regimes always became more corrupt than the regimes they claimed to correct. Despotism, which was entrenched and characteristic of military regimes completely destroyed the culture of accountability and enthroned impunity and encouraged influence peddling.

Over the years, corruption in Nigeria has become widespread and creates an enabling environment for organized crimes and bad governance. Ribadu graphically painted the current state of political corruption in Nigeria when he said:

… between 1960 and 1999 Nigerian officials had stolen or wasted more than $40 billion dollars. That is six times the Marshal plan, the total sum needed to rebuild a devastated Europe in the aftermath of World War 11. When you look across a nation that is continuously riddled with poverty and weak institutions; and you think of what this money could have done – only then can you truly understand the crime of corruption, and the almost inhumane indifference that is required by those who wield it for personal gain.

It is clear from this that political corruption has the most devastating effect on the people. It robs the people of their common patrimony and deprives the present and future generations of their rights to development and self actualization. This can be seen in the recent senate public investigation on the sales of government companies by the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE). The investigation revealed a lack of due process and the giving away of public enterprises for peanuts. For instance, the Delta Steel Company was sold to a company that did not participate in the bid. In another instance, Ajaokuta steel complex worth over two hundred billion naira (about $10m).

Judicial corruption

The judiciary was once viewed as the last hope of the common man. However, this “last hope” tag of the judiciary appears to be a fallacy of imagery in recent times. This is because of the unethical and illegal activities that go on in the Nigerian judicial system. Indeed, corruption has found its way into the judiciary and the confidence of the people in the judiciary as the “last hope” of the common man has been eroded. Corruption in the judiciary compromises the rule of law. This can be seen in the words of Ogbu (2011) as he says “the high courts, however, have been a stumbling block in the fight against corruption through the abuse of their power to grant injunctions.”

Again, in 2001, the senate set up the Oyofo Committee to investigate the alleged cases of impropriety in the award of contracts by the National Assembly. The committee in its report indicted the then Senate President and four other senators for impropriety in the awards of contracts. The indicted legislators obtained a court injunction restraining the Attorney General of the federation, the Inspector General of Police, and the Senate from arresting or initiating criminal proceedings against them. This issue raised so much dust that the Chief Justice of Nigeria had to issue a warning to judges who issued injunctions without due consideration to observe the tenets of fairness, equity, transparency and responsibility. The absence of these basic judicial tenets or principles shows that there is something wrong with such a judicial system.

We can see the presence of corruption in the Nigerian judicial system through the case where some Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SAN), were arraigned in an Abuja High Court for offering gratification to some officers of the Independent National Electoral Commission. On that same day of their arraignment, the High Court discharged them without reasonable grounds. Though ICPC has appealed against the discharge but how far will the appeal go within the same system?

The courts in Nigeria in a number of cases had rendered interpretations that tend to protect corrupt practices. Ogbu (2011) in an essay titled “Political will and war against corruption” agrees with this assertion as he declares that:

… an Abuja High Court deals a fatal blow to the code of conduct mechanism for fighting corruption when it held without justification, that the code of conduct mechanism is subject to the immunity clause.

This ruling by the apex court was quite unfortunate and damaging for the image of the judiciary. The court should have, at least made pronouncement on the illegality and unconstitutionality of the action of corporate Nigeria in making a political donation in billions of naira to President Obasanjo’s re-election campaign when the constitution in an unambiguous term expressly prohibits it.

The above analyses portray the judiciary as not only compromising the law but laying dangerous precedents for corrupt practices to thrive in Nigeria. It is therefore based on all these compromising application of the rule of law that the issue of corruption within the judicial system in Nigeria was generated. It is also in line with what Fred Alasia (SAN) once said in an interview with Tell Magazine. He said “When morality fails, impunity reigns. And I think our judiciary system has failed the morality test.”
Bid-rigging

Bid-rigging falls under public administration and corruption in public administration results in inefficient provision of services. It violates a basic principle of republicanism regarding the centrality of civic virtue. The issue of bid-rigging came to the fore-front again in the ongoing senate investigation of the sale of public enterprises by the Bureau for Public Enterprises (BPE). During the investigation which started on 8th August, 2011, it was disclosed that even companies that did not go through the bid process ended up buying some enterprises. This is a serious breach of due process. Bid-rigging is a breach and contravention of the Public Procurement Act. Under the Act, there are procedures laid down to be followed in the procurement of goods for government and every government institution or establishment. One of the requirements for public procurement is to advertise for companies to bid. The bids are supposed to be sent in by different companies. But this is not the practice as most public functionaries ask their chosen contact person to bring in multiple bids in already agreed prices and terms. This is what is known as bid-rigging.

Contract inflation and kick backs

The concept of contract inflation and kick backs in Nigeria dates back to the 1960s, and then blossomed during the era of General Yakubu Gowon when the policy of rehabilitation and reconstruction was adopted after the civil war. During this time, there was massive construction works in Nigeria. Indeed, most of the roads and national structures in the country were built during that era. The construction jobs were given out as contracts. It is through the process of awarding a contract that the value is inflated, that is, there is an increase in the actual amount quoted or estimated as the cost of the contract. The inflated sum or price is usually given to the government officials that award the contract.

Kick back, on the other hand, is a euphemism for bribe. Government functionaries collect a certain percentage of the contract sum as kick backs. This ranges between five to twenty five percent. Kick back is the major reason for most substandard jobs that we have in Nigeria. The reason for this is because after paying kick backs, the contractors resort to lowering project standards so as to make their own profit. This accounts for the non-durability of our roads and the collapse of public buildings. The contractors get away with all these because the people that would have inspected or certified the payment have all been compromised through kick backs. Such public officials run multiple bank accounts, both home and abroad, looking for countries with weak regulations to stash the stolen money. Some of them use the proceeds of contract inflation and kick backs to acquire houses all over the world. For instance, Ribadu (2009) established that a one-time governor of oil rich Bayelsa state, had four properties in London valued at about $10 million, another at Cape Town valued at $1.2 million and £1 million cash was found in his bedroom at his London home. £2 million was held in Royal Bank of Scotland and over $240 million in Nigeria. This does not include other bank accounts traced to Cyprus, Denmark, USA and the Bahamas.

Bribery

Bribery has been defined as an act of giving or taking money or something valuable in order to gain favor in a dishonest manner. In Nigeria, attempting, providing, giving, soliciting or accepting a bribe is considered as an offence that carries with it either criminal or civil liability. Bribery by implication is a corrupt act that violates a public servant’s responsibilities to members of the public. It involves the violation of public trust. It encourages unfair or undeserved benefit or advantage (Ogbu, 2011). Bribery can also be successful if there exists trust between the giver and receiver. This therefore makes bribery a joint activity that involves two sides of a transaction.

At times, it is very difficult to distinguish between a bribe and a gift. This can be seen in the case of the petroleum minister during the military era who was given a gold wrist watch, which was later considered as a bribe but he took it as a gift. It is on the basis of this confusion that certain criteria have been established to distinguish between a gift and a bribe. Such criteria include openness, freedom and good feeling by both parties. Both parties must be happy about the exchange to distinguish a gift from bribe. But where there are elements of secrecy, coercion and obligation, such is considered as a bribe and not a gift. In Nigeria, bribery is a very common form of corruption that occurs at almost every second and everywhere. This includes public and private sectors of the economy. The Nigerian Police Force is one public outfit where bribery is seen as a way of life. This is institutionalized in the Police as the police men and women engage in bribery openly within the police stations and on road check points.

The most outstanding and celebrated case of bribery in Nigeria in recent times remains the Halliburton’s case that features such big names that include a former president, his vice, a former military head of state and several others who are powerful members of the ruling elite. They are alleged to have shared $180 million bribe purportedly given to the Nigerian government officials by a foreign multinational company to win various contracts between 1995 and 2004 (Tell, June, 7, 2010).
Fraud

Fraud is one common corrupt practice. This happens in Nigeria regularly where people resort to it to gain illegal and unearned income. Fraud is viewed as an act of misrepresentation or deception. This includes charging for goods or services not supplied or changing the specifications of goods and services and their expiration dates, or even overpricing goods and services in order to cover the cost of bribes. Other forms of fraud include over-invoicing and cyber crimes. Fraud results in a loss of state revenue and personal income. In Nigeria the loss of revenue through fraudulent activities runs into about forty billion dollars annually (Tell, 2010).

Fraudulent activities occur in both private and public sector. The private sector involvement in fraud is to gain illegal and extra unearned income through changing the contents of documents or providing incorrect information and documents. In the public sector, fraudulent activities include overlooking altered or missing documents or by receiving bribes to ignore illegal activities or practices. There are other different kinds of fraud. Fraud occurs in the Nigerian customs service through the-under or over-declaration of the value of goods or misclassification to evade payment of tariffs.

There is also electoral fraud, which is usually carried out by politicians with the active connivance of electoral officials. This involves illegal interference with the process of an election. Acts of fraud affect vote contents to bring about an election result, through either inflating the votes of the favored candidate, or deflating the votes of the rival candidate or even both. Electoral fraud also includes multiple voter registration, intimidation at polls, and improper vote count and collation of election results.

Embezzlement

Embezzlement, which is the outright theft of entrusted funds by public officials, is a very common corrupt practice in Nigeria. This includes the misappropriation of public property which is one common type of embezzlement of resources. Here, the government official may divert the entrusted funds/resources for private and personal use. For instance, when a director of works or the permanent secretary of a government Ministry uses staff under him to build or renovate his house. Funds could be provided for a particular use, but the person may not utilize the funds for such official purpose but converted the funds for his/her personal use.

Nepotism and cronyism

These are other forms of corrupt practices. Nepotism and cronyism imply or involve favouring of relatives (nepotism) or personal friends (cronyism). So, when a relative or personal friend is favored by an official, it is a form of illegitimate private gain. Nepotism and cronyism may be combined with bribery. In Nigeria, we have a reported case of a former Minister of the Federal Capital Territory who allocated choice plots of government land in the Federal capital to his wife and children. Also, the former president has been accused of influencing the sales of government enterprises to his close associates.

Indeed, the privatization of public property typifies cronyism in Nigeria. This is because those with political connections unfairly gained stupendous wealth, as has been revealed in the ongoing senate investigation of the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE).

REASONS FOR CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

It has been argued that corruption in a country is indicative of the failure of government. It reveals that there is a great deal of uncertainty in the market place and that rules and regulations are vague and constantly changing. It indicates the fact that public policies are implemented inefficiently and incompetently. These conditions make it easier for unscrupulous private citizens and public officials to benefit personally.

Also, in Nigeria and some other countries, corruption exists because of certain traditions, customs, economic conditions, government or social disorder. One of the basic reasons for corruption in Nigeria has been the scandalous low pay received by public servants and the ambiguity of some laws that aid public servants to interpret these laws as they wish. So, overworked public servants also may ask for bribe to speed up processes. This system enables an inefficient bureaucracy to work faster (Wikipedia, 2011). In the same vein, Dike (2010) argued that the culture, value system, polygamous households, extended family system, lack of effective control of taxation system, poor reward system, lukewarm attitude of officers enforcing the laws, poverty and income inequalities are some of the reasons for corruption.

Traditionally, and in most customs in Nigeria, individuals are accorded respect and recognition not based on integrity, honesty, academic excellence and high moral values but on their financial strength or material affluence. It is mostly those who have made it materially and financially that are honoured with chieftaincy titles. It is not how much you have advanced and promoted the course of your people that earns honour and respect in Nigeria today, but how much you have in your pocket. It is on the basis of this that most people resort to corrupt activities to make it big and fast. Again, some customs in Nigeria like the Igbos of South East and Yorubas of South West are very mercantilist and materialistic. For instance, among the Igbos, there exists open competition for wealth.
The craving for material wealth among Nigerians has therefore killed social values and ethics of honesty, integrity, trust, good conscience and good name. Now, it is only money that gives one a reputation and a “good name”. This decay in social values and ethics is worsened by the prosperity gospel pioneered by Pentecostalism in Nigeria. Even within the church(es), it is only the rich that are constantly being pampered and prayed for by the clergies. The ordinary people have no social and religious relevance in the society anymore (Dike, 2010).

With societal rejection and castigation of those that failed to use their official positions to enrich themselves, it becomes psychologically challenging to make it by all means. So, there is also the psychological needs satisfaction angle to why corruption thrives in Nigeria. Every human being seeks social acceptance and the Nigerian society today, including churches, accepts the rich person unconditionally. The psychological trauma of being seen as a failure and unsuccessful is one of the motivational bases of corruption in Nigeria. The social demand on every member of the Nigerian society necessitates and encourages corrupt tendencies in most people. This can be seen in the culture of the extended family system where the entire family looks up to you as the breadwinner.

In Nigeria the socio-economic outlook of the ruling elites reflect what can be termed the western or neo-liberal philosophy. Claud Ake views morality or social values from this perspective when he says as quoted by Olorode (2011):

…the autonomy of morality of social values is more apparent than real contemporary western morality condemns theft. And, we forget that theft as a moral value is something created and dependent on a particular economic condition.

Furthermore, the psychology of corruption has been anchored among traditional rulers, religious leaders, intellectuals and even student leaders. This is achieved through the imposition of all sorts of ephemerals on public consciousness creating the “messiah, magic wand” and related syndromes in public consciousness and institutionalizing moral and psychological corruption. Most tragically, seasoned intellectuals in our academic institutions and the media have been recruited to develop and rationalize this decay and others like religious, ethno-nationalists and geo-political ideologies that are intended towards the distortion of historical facts. These are clear and crucial elements and reasons for corruption.

EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Corruption is a social problem that impedes development and robs the people of opportunities for any meaningful economic and social advancement (Ezekwesili et al., 2011). It leads to the undermining of public trust in public institutions or establishment and disproportionately affects the poor who cannot afford the payment of bribes to obtain public services. Through the distortion of government decision-making, it leads to wasteful investment projects, non-competitive and the uneconomic allocation of public funds. Corruption reduces the ability of the state to perform its statutory duties of providing social services such as healthcare, education, water and good transportation system. When these services are not provided, the result will be underdevelopment.

Again, corruption has the potentials and capacity to restrict investments, slow down economic, social and political development, as well as endanger democratic values and increases distrust among the citizenry and investors. It also increases the chances of instability in society since corrupt political leaders are often times under constant threat of being removed or overthrown. This accounts for the instability experienced in Nigeria within the past five decades.

Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately and increase income inequality since it permits particular individuals or groups of individuals to take advantage of state activities at the cost of the rest of the population. For instance, when corruption leads to shoddy public services, the poor have no alternatives or options since they cannot turn to the private sector, such as private schools, hospitals, security or garbage collection which cost more. In Nigeria, the public schools and hospitals which are ill-equipped are for the poor masses. The children of all the public figures are in private schools or are sent abroad where there are no interruptions of academic calendar due to avoidable incessant workers’ strike actions. Dike (2010) states that corruption is wasteful because of the manpower used in monitoring and investigations.

Indeed, corruption is destructive to Nigeria’s corporate image. This can be seen in the ranking of Nigeria by Transparency International as the second most corrupt country in the world.

PRESENT ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGIES IN NIGERIA

Dike (2010) states that the “unending chains of corruption-fighting commissions in the society include the code of conduct Bureau, and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC), the Police, Central Bank and the Court of Justice”. Past Nigerian governments have experimented with social reform policies aimed at ridding the Nigerian polity of corruption. Such policies include President Shehu Shagari’s “Ethical Revolution”, military president, General
Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida’s “Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Reconstruction” (MAMSER), The General Muhammadu Buhari and Brigadier General Tunde Idrisgbon’s “War Against Indiscipline” (WAI), General Sani Abacha’s National Orientation Agency (NOA) and President Olusegun Obasanjo’s “War Against Corruption.” Anti-corruption crusades and the so-called reforms have been the fulcrum of the economic and social policies of the last twelve years of the nation’s democratic rule. These policies have not achieved much. So, the failure of the previous strategies failed largely due to deceptive mechanisms behind their conception and formation.

The Code of Conduct Bureau is the only constitutionally established anti-corruption agency in Nigeria. This Bureau was established to combat corruption among public servants. But recent revelations by one of the commissioners showed that the Bureau never had a full complement of commissioners and as such was technically, in the legal sense, handicapped to perform its statutory functions. Again, the Supreme Court’s pronouncement in Nwankwo V. Nwaorkwo, which states that a private person has no locus standi to prosecute the contravention of the code of conduct, presents another legal jack on the neck of the Bureau in the discharge of its statutory duties.

Further, the Public Complaint Commission was established to receive complaints about official corruption and other unethical conduct of public officials. The commission has not achieved any reasonable thing to justify its establishment and the huge budgetary allocation given to it. The commission is indeed moribund and cannot stand a clinical approach to modern anti-corruption practices in Nigeria.

On the other hand, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) are Acts of parliament. There are statutorily empowered to investigate corruption in both public and private sectors respectively. The ICPC is to investigate all public officials of any corruption and related offences while the EFCC is to investigate both public servants and private individuals of all economic and financial crimes. The ICPC has been very thorough but very sluggish in its approach in the discharge of its statutory duties. It has few cases to its credit but without pursuing any to a logical conclusion. This approach of the ICPC has been attributed to the maturity of the hierarchy of the commission who has been retired Judges. So, the idea of assuming that the accused is innocent until proven guilty by a competent court holds sway and is a guiding principle in its operation. On the other hand, the EFCC has been the most vibrant anti-corruption agency in Nigeria. This is so, because of the number of cases the commission has been able to investigate, prosecute and recover stolen wealth. Again, the EFCC successfully investigated and prosecuted high profile offenders like an Inspector General of Police, nine former Governors, and a Minister of Education. These cases proved that the EFCC has the commitment to fight corruption in Nigeria.

This, however, has not deterred Nigerians and even foreign governments of questioning the efficacy of the EFCC’s anti-corruption posture. This is because it is perceived to target the president’s political foes. Olorode (2011) also shares this sentiment when he writes:

> The evidence before many Nigerians is to the effect that so much doubt exists about the character, procedures, sustainability and honesty of anti-corruption and related crusades. But they are enjoying the showmanship and grandstanding. Even the overseas guarantors of the ruling regimes in the last eleven years have denigrating views about the economy, security and sincerity of the anti-corruption crusades.

This trend has trailed all the commissions of enquiry and financial audit reports in Nigeria. Despite the huge public funds channeled into commissions of enquiry and financial audits, the government hardly implements any of the recommendations contained in such reports and audits. Also, the insights or findings of these commissions and audits are hardly brought to the public domain for scrutiny. The secrecy and sudden disappearance of these reports portray the various enquiries as lacking in political will and sincerity to wage a serious war against corruption.

**THE WAY FORWARD**

From our analysis, it is clear that there has been no reasonable political will to fight corruption by various Nigerian governments. It is that lack of political will that has made the various anti-corruption strategies to fail. So, what Nigeria needs to overcome corruption is a strong leadership with a political will that will both set an example and demonstrate in concrete terms that no one is above the law. Except there is a clear and unambiguous signal of support emanating from the top, those charged with the responsibility of administering and enforcing the crucial aspects of the nation’s integrity system may feel inhibited. It is therefore clear that political will is a critical and a basic starting point towards the achievement of a sustainable and effective anti-corruption strategy.

According to National Anti-corruption strategy and Action Plan for Tanzania, political will involves building legitimacy, credibility, and broad-based political support and compliance both in society and within government. However, our advocacy here mainly focuses on political will among the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government.
CONCLUSION

In present day Nigeria, sharp practices have come to be known as the Nigerian factor because they are so pervasive and accepted as the way to get things done both in the private and public sectors. In effect, the Nigerian psyche hardly sees anything wrong in corrupt practices. However, corruption in Nigeria, like everywhere else, can be combated. The measures adopted so far have not yielded desirable results because there is still a missing link. To get it right therefore, government should demonstrate a political will to fight corruption no matter whose ox is gored. Secondly, there is need for institutional strengthening through legislation and enforcement to make anti-corruption agencies more effective. Such legislations that need to be enforced include the Freedom of Information Bill which can serve as a potent tool in the hands of civil society organizations. Finally, if societal values are shifted from material wealth acquisition to doing public good, the fight against corruption will be on course.

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Furthermore, there is the need to bring about stronger rules and procedures that will make corruption unattractive in the country. The case where a person is found guilty of corruption to the tune of several billions of dollars and naira and there is only three or six months jail term or a plea bargain where you are kept in specialist private hospitals, will only encourage people to loot the public treasury with the hope that whenever they are called to answer questions they have nothing serious to lose. The cases of the chairman of the board of the Nigerian Ports Authority who looted public funds and the managing director of Oceanic Bank who looted investors' funds but only got light sentences, are cases that will encourage people to be more corrupt.

Again, there is the need to eradicate poverty in the land and redistribute the wealth of the nation. There should be a conscious effort to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. Also, the low income of the public/civil servants should be improved through a new minimum wage law.

There is also the urgent need to introduce a course like the psychology of corruption in our tertiary institutions. Also, from the primary to secondary schools, there is the need to reflect the negative effects of corruption in the curriculum.

Also, religious institutions can do much to preach the gospel of humility, chastity, honesty, truth, sincerity and uprightness. There is a need to promote the moral virtues of Jesus Christ rather than the gospel of prosperity. Holiness should be redefined with virtue as a necessary doctrine of all religions.

The police force which has been identified as one of the most corrupt institutions in Nigeria should be reformed. This should include a reorientation of members of the force to instill discipline and there should be an upward review of their salary structure in line with the importance of their job and as an anti-corruption institution. Their salary should make bribery unattractive. There is also the need to strengthen security operations in the country. This is because there cannot be any meaningful development where there is insecurity.

Again, the law that forbids public functionaries from operating foreign bank accounts should be invoked and enforced on all. Public officers, apart from declaring their assets, those of their family members should also be declared. This should be done while in office and after leaving office. There should be an efficient performance evaluation system in public service and incentives for good performance. All these, when put into effective practice, will go a long way to reduce corrupt activities and Nigeria’s image will be redeemed without the propaganda of rebranding.