

**DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE
SHADOW OF CORRUPTION IN AFRICA: THE
NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC IN PERSPECTIVE**

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ABSTRACT:

Nigeria's democratic project has been under perpetual threat since 1999 when the country returned to democratic governance especially as a result of high prevalence of corruption. There is no doubt that crime of corruption in government threatens the moral integrity of a nation and hampered development, this thus make the topic of discourse very interesting especially looking at the global effect of corruption on democracy and development generally. This study shows that political and bureaucratic corruptions have grave implications for democratic stability and sustainable development in Nigeria. It is argued that democratic stability will be difficult to attain as long as corruption remain pandemic and unchecked. This study examined critically the effects of corruption on democracy and development. It argues that high scale corruption may have very harmful effects on democracy and development. Finally, the paper discusses the moral imperative of democratic consolidation in Nigeria, and the argument it advances is that without this imperative, instability will pose as a feature of Nigerian democracy. This study concluded that corruption be deterred and punished in order to enhance democratic participation of citizenry and effective service delivery.

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INTRODUCTION:

Over the years, Africa has climbed the ladder of development rather slowly. Its movement has been hampered by unstable political regimes, corruption, mismanagement and violence. It is no surprise that for the last decade, most Africa countries have turned to democratic governance as the only catalyst to development. But does political democracy lead to development? Those who go about such business of agitating for democratization are convinced that no society truly desirous of development can ignore democracy. Africa is one of the continents of the world that has embraced the democratization process. In the last century when the rest of the world moved towards democracy and development, Africa remained a predominantly military or semi-military controlled continent ruled mostly by non-democratic and dictatorial governments. The effect of this undemocratic government in the continent is poverty. According to recent statistics, the quality of life for most people in Africa appears to have either not improved or only done so marginally (Wiredu, 2010).

The democratic experiences of the developed countries of the world lend credence to the truth of this claim. However, the reverse seems to be the case in many of the African countries where there exists a huge gap between the anticipated gains of democracy and the actual realities on the ground. The nature of African development is such that has remained poor and lags behind other regions in the world.

Today, it is evident that the most popular form of government in the world is democracy, judging by its wide acceptance and pretensions to it by those who in reality are averse to its tenets. The reason for this lies in the fact that being democratic today now signifies being good and admissible into the comity of nations as opposed to the isolation meted out to regimes considered to be despotic. Governance and democracy have become widely recognized as prerequisites for sustained development (Johnson 1982; White and Wade 1988). Democratic governance fosters transparency, accountability, the rule of law, respect for human rights, civic participation, and civic inclusiveness – all of which are necessary for securing economic productivity, equitable distribution of resources and state legitimacy. African States therefore have a role to play in the development process by ensuring that democratic governance is institutionalized in order to provide routine instrumentalities for peace and stability and to enhance the attainment of human-centered development.

There are many unresolved problems in African democratic experience, but the issue of the upsurge of corruption is troubling. And the damages it has done to the polity are astronomical. The menace of corruption leads to slow movement of files in offices, police extortion tollgates and slow traffics on the highways, port congestion, queues at passport offices and gas stations, ghost workers syndrome, election irregularities, among others. Even the ordinary people on the street recognize the havoc caused by corruption – the funds allocated for their welfare disappear into the thin air. Thus, it is believed by many in the society that corruption is the bane of African democracy and development. Consequently, the issue keeps reoccurring in every academic and informal discussion in Africa.

In Nigeria, it is a known fact that corruption has been threatening the democratic foundation since independence in 1960 and also the beginning of the fourth republic in 1999. Different opinions, strategies, programmes proffered and implemented by governmental and non-governmental organisations to curb as well as to reduce it are to no avail. Therefore, corruption has become the biggest challenge militating against Nigeria's democratisation march, which has always shown its effects on Nigeria's past and present fragile and fledgling democracy. It has in Nigeria assumed a notorious dimension and has become the "common cold" in the social ailments afflicting the state of democracy and development.

This paper examines the effect of corruption on democracy and development in Africa. There is no doubt that crime of corruption in government threatens the moral integrity of a nation and hampered development, this thus make the topic of discourse very interesting especially looking at the global effect of corruption on democracy and development generally.

CONCEPTUAL EXPLANATIONS:

There are three concepts central to our discourse in this paper. These are; Democracy, Development and Corruption. In this section, attempts shall be made to define and explain these concepts in order to place them in the right perspective.

DEMOCRACY: One fundamental problem created by the elastic use of the concept of democracy is the problem of definition (Falaiye, 1998: 97). However, the quest to know the ideal definition becomes imperative because "if democracy is not properly defined people would live

in an inextricable confusion of ideas much to the advantage of demagogues and despots” (McGowan, 1991). In addition, ‘it leaves us in the danger of refusing something that we have properly identified and getting in exchange something that we would not want at all (McGowan, 1991). No wonder, Ebegbulem (2011) noted that:

The concept of democracy has received many definitions since it was loosely defined by a one-time great American President, Abraham Lincoln as “the government of the people, by the people and for the people”. Since then, a lot of literatures abound on the concept of democracy with varied definitions. The concept of democracy was based on the maxim contained in the American Declaration of Independence from British rule that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights by their creator. According to this laudable concept, government exists to secure these rights, and governments must derive their powers from the consent of the governed.

At its most basic level, a democratic system can be defined in procedural terms as ‘that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote’ (Schumpeter, 1942).

Diamond, Linz, and Lipset (1989) see democracy as a system of government that meets three essential conditions; one, meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and groups, especially parties for all effective positions of government power at regular intervals, excluding the use of force; two, a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair election, so that no major (adult) social group is excluded; and three, a high level of civil and political liberties, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom to form or join organization so as to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation.

Democracy as it is practiced in Nigeria embraces the definition of democracy by Plato – a 5th century B.C. Athenian great philosopher and political thinker. According to Plato, “democracy is the gently art of gathering votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich by promising to protect each from the other”. In reality, democracy is fundamentally defined by freedom from hunger, the right to education and health. There is no doubt that democracy has no meaning in the absence of the rule of law, and its survival depends on the independence of the judiciary and

the legislature. It comes with a great deal of freedom and liberty. The supremacy of the law is the hallmark of any democratic government. The law is the ultimate sovereign and not any person or group of persons.

Generally, democracy as viewed by Ayoade (1998), democracy is a form of government in which citizens in a state have political investments of political participation and trust. It essentially has to do with the ability of the people to control decision-making; which explains why Osaghae (1994) asserts that the central thing about democracy is to ensure that power belongs to the people.

Democracy simply signifies that the ultimate authority belongs to the people (Ebegbulem, 2011). As stated by Adeyemi (2006), the ideal or the best system of government ever evolved by human beings is the democratic form of government. While some scholars, including this author, believe that democracy is a necessary precondition for development, other holds the strong view that, with the experience in South Asia, it is the other way round. The debate seems unending. However, as a political scientist, I posit that no matter its imperfections, democracy remains the best and most reliable form of human organisation ever known to man. To that extent, our disappointments notwithstanding, we should all support the democratic edifice in place in our country.

DEVELOPMENT: The term ‘development’ has been adapted to mean many things. More often than not, the term has been confusingly used in literature, that its true meaning has become problematic. It has been used interchangeably with synonyms or adjectives like ‘transformation’, ‘growth’, ‘modernization’, ‘advancement’, etc. More so, as articulated by Walter Rodney, ‘development in human society is a many-sided process’. According to him, at the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. At the level of social groups, therefore, development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships. Development in the past has always meant the increase in the ability to guard the independence of the social group and indeed to infringe upon the freedom of others – something that often came about irrespective of the will of the person within the societies involved. More often than not, the term ‘development’ is used in an exclusive economic sense – the justification being that the type of economy is itself an index of other social features. He then concludes that

‘development is universal because the conditions leading to economic expansion are universal’ (Rodney, 2005).

Pieterse Jan Nederveen (2001) defined development as ‘the organized intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement’. He stated further that ‘what constitutes improvement and what is appropriate intervention obviously vary according to class, culture, historical context and relations of power’. To Ake (1995) development is “the process by which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choice and values”. Similarly Cowen and Shenton (1996) refers to development as the ‘remedies for the shortcomings and maladies of progress’.

Development is coterminous with capacity expansion and freedom. As capacity expansion, it requires adequate empowerment of the state and society such that they can adequately distil their complimentary responsibilities. It also requires enhanced state capacity as well as institutional and governmental stability. As freedom, development demands great latitude of autonomy for the political community and its constituent parts, as well as the individual members of such communities. Democracy and development therefore share in common attributes such as popular empowerment, participation and freedom (Omotola, 2006).

CORRUPTION: It has been argued that corruption is a universal phenomenon that cuts across nations, cultures, races, and classes of people in both developed and developing countries (Aderonmu, 2011). The concept of corruption is a familiar concept, but it is not easy to define. It has been defined in many societies in relation to the culture or prescribed way of people’s social life. As one of the oldest and most perplexing phenomenon in human society, political corruption exist in every country in the contemporary world and it is not exclusively a problem of developing countries. The classical concept of corruption as a general disease of the body politics was stated by ancient political philosophers Plato and Aristotle. Plato in his theory of the "perverted" constitutions-Democracy, oligarchy, and tyranny-worried that these regimes instead of being guided by the law were serving the interest of the rulers. "These fundamental general notions of corruption all practically define corruption as dysfunctional. For it is seen as destructive of a particular political order, be it monarchy, aristocracy, or polity, the latter a constitutionally limited popular rule, and thus by definition devoid of any function within a

political order." This classic conception of corruption continued into modern times, and is central to the political thought of Machiavelli, Montesquieu and Rosseau.

For Machiavelli, corruption was process by which the virtue of the citizen was undermined and eventually destroyed. "Since most men are weak and lacking in the virtue of the good citizen except when inspired by a great leader, the process of corruption is ever threatening. And when virtue has been corrupted, a heroic leader must appear who in rebuilding the political order infuses this virtue into the entire citizenry" (Arnold, 1993:25). Montesquieu saw corruption as the dysfunctional process by which a good political order is perverted into evil one and a monarchy into a despotism. According to Rosseau political corruption is a necessary consequences of the struggle for power.

While some view corruption in terms of illegal acquisition of material things, others tend to stretch it further by bringing in social and moral values (Metiboba, 1999). El-Rufai (2003) viewed corruption as covering a wide range of social misconducts, including fraud, extortion, embezzlement, bribery, nepotism, influence peddling, bestowing of favour to friends, rigging of elections, abuse of public property, the leaking of a government secret, and sale of expired and defective goods, such as drugs, food, and electronic and spare parts to the public, etc.

Corruption is defined by the World Bank and Transparency International (TI) as "the misuse of public office for private gain" (World Bank, 1997). Akinyemi (2004) defined corruption as the acquisition of that which one (as a member of society, not public official alone) is not entitled to. Odey (2002) contextualizes corruption in Nigeria as the air which every living person breathes in and out. According to him, nobody makes any effort to breathe in the air; it comes naturally. Corruption, in Nigeria, has become so naturalized that many of us simply becomes corrupt without making any effort and often even without knowing it.

These definitions bring light to the extent to which corrupt practices are indulged and perpetrated. They further revealed the degree at which aiding and abetting could breed and nurture corruption. Corruption viewed from different perspectives by scholars, share some common concern. It is a serious societal problem about which something has to be done to reduce its occurrence and prevalence.

DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT: AN INTERACTIVE RELATIONSHIP:

The debate on the relationship between democracy and development has been on the front burner of scholarly discourse over the years. The debate according to Omotola (2006) remains one of the hotly debated issues, today as yesterday; and may continue to be. This is why Feng (2001) noted that “one of the most important topics – perhaps even the single most important – in the field of international and comparative political economy for years to come”.

Most of us, ardent democrats all, would like to believe that democracy is not merely good in itself, it is also valuable in enhancing the process of development. Of course, if we take a suitably broad concept of development to incorporate general well-being of the population at large, including some basic civil and political freedoms, a democracy which ensures these freedoms is, almost by definition, more conducive to development on these counts than a non-democratic regime. We may, however, choose to look at freedoms as potentially instrumental to development, as is usually the case in the large empirical literature that aims at finding a statistical correlation between some measure of democracy and some measure of a narrower concept of development (that does not include those freedoms as an intrinsic part of the nature of development itself) (Bardhan, 2008).

Democracy and development are complementary, and they reinforce each other. The link between them is all the stronger because it originates in the aspirations of individuals and peoples and in the rights they enjoy. Indeed, history shows that cases where democracy and development have been dissociated have mostly resulted in failure. Conversely, ‘the interlinking of democratization and development helps both of them to take root durably’ (Boutros-Ghali, 2003). For if political democracy, in order to consolidate itself, needs to be complemented by economic and social measures that encourage development, similarly any development strategy needs to be ratified and reinforced by democratic participation in order to be implemented. Democracy and development can together contribute to the consolidation of peace. Most of the time democracies settle their domestic disputes by peaceful means. Moreover, in addition to this preventive role, the democratic framework has often proved effective in settling international conflicts peacefully. Democracy is a factor of peace and therefore encourages development,

which itself tends to consolidate the state of domestic peace and, consequently, international peace, since many wars originate from domestic conflicts (Wiredu, 2010).

A school of authors argues that democracy is precondition for development. For this school of thought, democracy is an independent variable that explains the level of economic development of any society. That is why Zack-Williams (2001), concludes that “no democracy, no development”, following this incisive reflections on the African experience. According to him, an essential weapon of democracy that makes it a requisite for economic development is that democracy empowers the general population to control decision making. As such, the governed are presumed to have all it takes to hold governments accountable by insisting on transparency, openness and other measures of control. The absence of these virtues is considered as very inimical to the pursuit of economic development (Omotola, 2006).

The relationship between democracy and development is far more contentious. The question of whether political regimes affect economic growth was raised many years and remains unanswered. The idea that autocratic regimes have an advantage in economic development, although no longer taken seriously, was once quite fashionable. The advantages of autocratic regimes, to be sure, were not intrinsically derived. Rather, these regimes were supposed to have an edge in development mainly because they were said to lack the same disadvantages often associated with democracy. More specifically, these disadvantages according to Diamond, et al (1999) include; insecure property rights of the wealthy (as a result of the enfranchisement of the poor, who are expected to use their voting power to redistribute wealth); high propensity to consume (as a result of electoral politics and meeting voters’ short-term demands); rent-seeking by special interest groups that penetrate the open political process and use their influence to produce socially inefficient policies. As a theory, autocracy-good-for-development was thus extremely weak. ‘While open political processes under democracy may lead to the above-described problems, there is nothing intrinsic to autocracy that would convince adequately that the same problems would not exist under autocratic rule’.

Not all cases of public pressure that democracy facilitates help development either. Democracies may be particularly susceptible to populist pressures for immediate consumption, unproductive subsidies, autarchic trade policies, and other particularistic demands that may hamper long-run investment and growth. On the other hand, authoritarian rulers who may have the capacity to

resist such pressures may instead be self-aggrandizing, plundering the surplus of the economy. In fact, historically, authoritarian regimes come in different kinds, some deriving their legitimacy from providing order and stability (like that of Franco in Spain or SLORC in Myanmar more recently), some from rapid growth (like Park Chung Hee in South Korea). Sah (1991) has argued that authoritarian regimes exhibit a larger variance in economic performance than democracies. Democracy helps development through the accountability mechanisms it installs for limiting the abuse of executive power, and provides a system of periodic punishments for undesirable government interventions in the economy and rewards for desirable interventions.

The case that democracy promotes development rests on the central idea that the political institutions critical to economic development are more likely to exist and function effectively under democratic rule. These institutions include the rule of law which protects property rights, individual liberties which foster creativity and entrepreneurship, the freedom of expression which ensures the production and unimpeded flow of information, and institutional checks and balances that prevent massive theft of public wealth often observed in autocracies.

CORRUPTION, DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: A BRIEF OVERVIEW:

Corruption in Africa is a development issue. African countries cannot bear the cost of corruption, which impedes development and minimizes the ability of government to reduce poverty. Effectively addressing corruption in African countries has become a development imperative. Thus, within the last one decade or so, the issue of corruption has taken the centre stage in development discourse and Africa being the poorest and the most underdeveloped continent, despite its immense human and natural resources is the laboratory for those discourses (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2010). Corruption drain from African countries over \$140 billion per year (Ribadu, 2007). It was Ake (1995) who painted a gloomy picture of the African continent saying, “most of Africa is not developing”. According to him:

Decades of efforts have yielded largely stagnation, regression or worse. The tragic consequences of this are increasingly clear; a rising tide of poverty, decaying public

utilities and infrastructures, social tensions and political turmoil, and now, premonition of inevitable drive into conflict and violence

This apt description of the decline in nearly all African countries underscores the depth of underdevelopment ravaging the people in the midst of abundant natural resources as a result of corruption. This according to Fagbadebo (2007) has a grave effect on development, as corruption and inefficiency are concealed; as observed with the spate of abandoned projects. The African state according to Ayittey (2006);

has evolved into a predatory monster or a gangster state that uses a convoluted system of regulations and controls to pillage and rob the productive class – the peasantry. It is common knowledge that heads of states, ministers, and highly placed African government officials raid the government treasury, misuse their positions in government to extort commissions on foreign loan contracts, skim foreign aid, inflate contracts to cronies for kickbacks and deposit the loot in overseas banks. The very people who are supposed to defend and protect the peasants' interests are themselves engaged in institutionalized looting.

After nearly five decades, Africa seems to be realizing the need to govern democratically. This is evident in the vast democratic development that has spanned the continent in the last two years. Autocracies and military regimes seem to be gradually turning the tables round on the side of democracy. Indeed, “after long midnights of stagnation, Africa is rising” (Stith, 2009). The recent peaceful elections in Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar and Sudan, the constitutional reforms in Zimbabwe and Nigeria, Nigeria's 2011 elections, democratic reforms in Somalia, Burundi and Comoros Islands, among many others are just a few of such democratic developments.

Over the years, Africa's democratic development has been hindered by electoral malfeasance, weak legislative bodies, desolate judicial systems, fragile civil societies, and poorly funded free media. So far, only few countries including Botswana, Mauritius, Mozambique, Ghana, and South Africa have succeeded in implementing and managing regulatory framework and oversight mechanisms against such misdemeanors. It is an established fact that free and fair elections are vital to the legitimacy of a democratic government. However, credible elections in Africa are more than matched by the actions of autocratic leaders in countries like Cameroon, Chad, Gabon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Togo, Mauritania, and Zimbabwe. Though these

leaders conduct elections and spout democratic rhetoric, the elections are marred by purged voter rolls, political patronage, and stuffed ballot boxes. These practices diminish popular confidence in the meaning and merits of democratic governance. Nigeria serves as an example of flawed electoral practices. Both its previous two national elections in 1999 and 2004 were blemished by serious voting irregularities (Wiredu, 2010), while there was improvement in the conduct of 2011 general elections.

CORRUPTION AND DEMOCRATIC INSTABILITY IN NIGERIA, 1999-2011:

Corruption is a complex multifaceted and persistent cancerous phenomenon which bedevils Nigeria. In Nigeria, as in many African states, it is a malaise that inflicts the society (Obuah, 2010). The history of Nigeria is tainted with the absence of good moral and ethical values in the conduct of the ruling elites. This has adversely affected economic growth and development. As corruption impacted negatively on development, it is also politically destabilising. Corruption and abuse of power have long been features of Nigeria's economic and political landscape (Fagbadebo, 2007). The National Planning Commission (2005), for instance, has identified systemic corruption, which engenders low level of accountability and transparency as a major source of development failure. This shows that Nigeria represents a typical case of the African country whose development has been undermined and retarded by the menace of corrupt practices.

Corruption is a universal problem, but it is more pronounced, more pervasive and hence more deleterious to progress and development in developing countries such as Nigeria. In fact, corruption has become synonymous with governance in Nigeria. Consequently, it has become the bane the Nigerian societies (Anifowose, 2007). Corruption in Nigeria has become a malignant disease that has eaten deep down all the fabrics of the Nigerian government; this is evidently supported by the observation of Twaddle (1998), that:

It is no exaggeration to say that if a calculating enemy of Nigeria had set out to undermine and destroy Nigeria's reputation and Nigeria's potential to become an active respected member of the international community, that enemy could not have

contrived a scheme more effective and more damaging than the campaign conducted today by Nigeria's home-grown and home-based

The perception of corruption in public is not a new idea in Nigeria, thus, the idea of preventing corruption is as old as mankind, though the method has changed and more sophisticated today.

The multiple developmental problems confronting Nigeria today, as a nation are obviously symptomatic of a fundamental crisis of governance attributable to the history of a nation characterised by deep-rooted corruption, social injustice and political stability. Corruption has undermined democratic governance in Nigeria and its pervasiveness if unchecked may truncate the country's nascent democracy. Lamenting the effect of corruption in Nigeria, Tokunbo (1975) asserts that:

It is not an exaggeration of the tragic events of the country since independence, to say that all efforts to establish a just and efficient administration have been frustrated by corruption. the evil exist in every facet of our society. You bribe to get your child into a school, you pay to secure a job and you also continue to pay in some cases to retain it. You pay 10 percent of any contract obtained. You dash the tax officer to avoid paying taxes, you pay the hospital doctor and nurse to get proper attention, you pay the policemen to evade arrest. This catalogue of shame can continue without an end.

Nigeria presents a veritable case for understanding the connection between corruption and political malaise. Ribadu (2006) gave a graphic summary of the situation. According to him, the period between 1979 and 1998 represent "the darkest period" in Nigeria's history of corrupt regimes. The civilian administration of 1979 – 1983 was bedevilled with profligacy, "wanton waste, political thuggery and coercion.. disrespect for the rule of law... bare faced, free for all looting of public funds through white elephant projects". In analysing this period, Adeseyoju (2006) noted that; "corruption is far more dangerous than drug trafficking or other crime because when it goes unpunished, the public loses confidence in the legal system and those who enforce the law". During the military regimes, especially under General Sanni Abacha, the military paralysed the machinery of governance and pauperised the citizenry in years of looting and frenetic looting. Abacha was reputed to have stolen US\$1.13 billion and £413 billion, apart from US\$386 million defrauded through fictitious and inflation of contracts (Fagbadebo, 2007). This shows that Nigerian state is a victim of high level corruption causing the retardation of national

development and a ceaseless cycle of crisis arising from people's discontent against the government.

Nigeria's democratic project has been under perpetual threat since 1999 when the country returned to democratic governance especially as a result of high prevalence of corruption. Put differently, corruption is a major challenge to democratic stability in Nigeria. The political climate, to say the least has been hostile to democracy. The general scepticism has been whether the current experience will last. This cynicism is justifiable when one consider the fact that all the factors that precipitated the collapse of the First and Second Republics are currently at play. Widespread violence, electoral frauds, political assassination, politically inspired ethno-religious conflict, apathy, evitable economic woes and its attendant consequences (abject poverty, slums etc.), flagrant disregard for the rule of law, disrespect for human rights and pandemic corruption remains the key features of Nigerian political life. These manifestations of democratic instability are the symptoms and consequences of basic system pathology, majorly, political corruption (Ogundiya, 2010). This was the situation on ground at the inception of democratic governance in 1999. This prompted Obasanjo on 29th May, 2000 to declare that:

Corruption, the greatest bane of our society today will be tackled head on No society can achieve anything near its full potential if it allows corruption to become the full blown cancer it has become (cited by Akanbi, 2007).

It is now history that twelve years ago, Nigeria returned to multiparty democracy with all the expectations that the fruit of democratic governance would be brought to bear on the economy, that the country would witness a greater respect for civil and political liberties, and, above all, the institutionalization of accountability and transparent in governance. However, the period since 1999 has witnessed an increased number of ethno-religious violence, leading to social, economic, and political misfortunes. The violence not only posed serious obstacles to the enhancement of democratic ethos and values, but also constituted a threat to the viability of Nigerian nationhood and governances. In spite of her human and natural resource endowments, the majority of Nigerians still lives in abject poverty as a result of corruption. Public institutions are ill equipped and service delivery is poor. The theft of public funds has resulted in serious chaos. Nigeria's treasury looters and their allies are getting richer, while the masses are wallowing in abject poverty. In the public sector, a band of short-sighted and greedy elite, both

military and civilian, have, within a decade, created, nurtured, and perpetuated the conversion of public treasury and national wealth for exceeding private uses. These elite eschewed transparency and abhorred rules and regulations, broken laws, violated due processes, and crudely stole from the public coffers (Jega, 2009).

In Nigeria, as in many African countries, corruption as a malaise that afflicts the society. It deters investment because it is disincentive to potential investors; it distorts public expenditure, increases the overhead of running businesses, and divert resources from poor to the rich (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2010). As noted by Ogundiya (2008) corruption has been the bane of legitimacy, democratic stability and socio-economic and political development in Nigeria. Indeed any attempt to understand the tragedy of development and the challenges of democracy in Nigeria must come to grips with the problem of corruption

Today, for much of the international press and world public opinion, Nigeria is the *bête noire*, or the *enfant terrible*, of Africa. Tales of violence, extortion, and other criminal acts abound in conversation about Nigeria around the world (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). As observed by Abu (2007), one of the most obvious dividends of democracy in Nigeria today is perhaps that Nigerians can talk openly about what they perceive as one of the greatest impediment to good governance and sustainable development is the “climate of corruption”. The everyday lives of most people are permeated by corruption. In spite of the existence of nascent democracy, the problem of corruption in Nigeria continues to be a severe one.

Events in Nigeria since 1999 have shown that the tidal waves of reversal have been contending with Nigeria’s democratic project. Consequently, democracy has remained grossly unstable and the future seems to be very bleak because of rampant systemic bureaucratic and political corruption. Corruption has reached a high crescendo such that an average Nigerian now possibly associates democracy with corruption. The consequences of corruption are patently manifest: cyclical crisis of legitimacy, fragile party structure, institutional decay, chronic economic problem and underdevelopment and, above all, general democratic volatility (Ogundiya, 2010). Then, what are the effects of corruption on democratic stability? This shall be discussed paying attention to the effects of corruption on development and the socio-psychological and political behaviour of both the politicians and the electorates.

In the view of Ige (2007), corruption and other organised crimes account for a substantial part of the impediments to development in Nigeria, and have succeeded in devastating the image of the country in the world. As a consequence of the impact of corruption, the Nigerian state has become such a weak edifice, a failed state unable to perform even its basic and ordinary functions of providing water, electricity and fuel to its people. In Nigeria, the revelations of corrupt practices coming out of the various probe panels are so mind-boggling. This serves as a confirmation that corruption is a way of life in Nigeria. The phenomenon of corruption in Nigeria can be further explained by twin concepts of prebendalism and clientilism in the politics of nation. Joseph (1999) argued that clientilism and prebendalism are two elements of the socio-political system which affect and determine, to a great extent, the allocation of public goods in Nigeria. Corruption has therefore assumed a normal pattern of life in Nigeria. A way of getting “everything” done and a norm in the land. Consequently, the situation has rendered the Nigerian state – a non delivery state. Corruption has denied the Nigerian people the beauty of good governance.

It is important to point out that the level of corruption has affected the cognitive perception of Nigerians, first about the ability of the state to organise a free and fair electoral contest; and second, perception that political appointments are one sure way to wealth and elevation of social status; and third, perception that the political office holders cannot be responsive and accountable to the citizens. The impact of this on democratic stability is clear. Electoral contest has become a do or die affair, turning Nigeria’s political milieu to a Hobbesian state of nature- war of all against all characterised by what Ibeanu (2007) aptly described as the “primitive accumulation of votes” or “machine politics”. This, according to Ibeanu (2007) is to sustain the belief that a legitimate way of securing political office is to steal the peoples’ mandate. The 2006 brouhaha between President Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar over corruption is indicative of how high corruption has permeated into the Nigeria society.

Transparency International (TI) has consistently ranked Nigeria very low. For example, in 2006, Nigeria was ranked 146 with 2.2 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) score out of 163 and in 2007, it was ranked 148 with 2.2 score. According to TI, low scores in the CPI is an indication that the public institutions are heavily comprised. Furthermore TI noted that in Nigeria, more than 50 percent of bribes were directly asked for, while 60 percent were offered to avoid

problems with authorities; and more than 40 percent offered bribe to obtain access to a service they were entitled to (Obuah, 2010).

Within the context of the Nigerian state, it is not as if successive governments have not realized the problem posed by corruption to the socio-economic and political development of the country. Without doubt, successive government at one time or the other has been making series of attempt at combating corruption through series of anti-corruption campaigns. What is in doubt however is what impact these have on Nigeria's development. Over the years various administrations in Nigeria have articulated policies and measures designed to combat corruption. Examples include General Muritala Muhammed's crusade of confiscation of assets illegally acquired by Nigerians; Sheu Shagari's ethical revolution to combat corruption through the introduction of code of conduct for public servants, General Buhari's operation war against indiscipline, General Ibrahim Babangida's ethical and social mobilisation crusade, etc. These efforts have been largely cosmetic attempts to address a systemic problem that is deep rooted in the fabric of the country. In its effort to fight corruption and create credibility to attract international investments, the Obasanjo government among other things established the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Independent and other related offences Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). They were charged with wide range responsibilities within the context of preventing, detecting, investigating, and prosecuting all cases of corrupt practices in Nigeria (Obuah, 2010).

Anti-corruption action has produced a mountain of words and hardly a molehill of solid results in terms of positive change, or, reform, in institutional behaviour. Failure in this regard has much to do with the complexity, dynamism and pervasiveness of the corruption. Where corruption is choking development, a few with access systematically distort political and economic decisions which might be made (systematically) with conflict of interest at play.

A flashback to the operations of these agencies would only lead to the conclusion that the battle against corruption in Nigeria for now is a foregone conclusion. If the above is taken therefore, how then do we measure development in a striking nation such as Nigeria?

Corruption persists in Nigeria because the roots of corruption are left intact. For one thing Nigerian state remains a veritable arena for encouraging corruption (Babawale and Onuoha, 2007). In spite of the anti-corruption initiatives put in place by Obasanjo administration to stem corruption in Nigeria, the problem still pervasive, corruption still goes on within the state

apparatus. As noted by Anifowose (2007) hardly can one browse through a Nigerian daily newspaper without coming across reports relating to corruption or even outright embezzlement of public fund.

The problem with combating corruption in Nigeria as observed was not that of lack of the requisite legal regimes, but the enabling political will. For where corruption is systemic, the formal rules remain in place, but they are superseded by informal rules. More often than not, the country's political leadership pays lip service to the issue of corruption. What is critically needed at this stage of the war on corruption and all other forms of social indiscipline is the political will to fight this hydra-headed monster.

THE PROSPECTS OF DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA:

A decade of hindsight offers an empirical basis for greater optimism about the durability and performance of democracy in Nigeria. The wave of democratization in the country is partial and potentially reversible, and sceptics have identified important vulnerabilities. Yet Nigeria's democracies have lasted longer and performed better than initially expected.

Emerging evidence seems to confirm that, in Nigeria where democracy has been established, states have tended to perform better as agents of development. These effects seem to hinge on the benefits of imposing institutional checks on leaders' discretionary authority, backed by the ability to remove governments that fail to improve the well-being of their people. Democratically elected governments have no monopoly on economic insight, but under democratic regimes "bad economics" eventually becomes "bad politics," giving government's strong incentives to change course. In light of Nigeria's diversity, any sweeping generalization about prospects for democracy and development would be misleading (Wiredu, 2010).

Nigeria's prospects for a better future continue to brighten as many countries in the region are beginning to reap the benefits of economic policy changes, improved governance and investments in key social sectors undertaken during the past decade. With the rebounding of the global economy, the continued growth of responsible and representative governments and the

recovery from several lengthy conflicts, Nigeria is poised to see more robust economic growth and an improvement in living standards in the years ahead.

With its vibrant civil society and increasingly independent legislative and judicial branches of government, Nigeria has the essential ingredients for democracy to take root. In May 2007, for the first time in Nigeria's post-independence history, a civilian government handed over power to another upon completion of a full-term as mandated by the constitution. However, the conduct of the April 2007 elections continued the negative trend of poor election administration, which began with the 1999 polls and continued in 2003. Poor governance and entrenched corruption at the national, state and local level has left Nigeria at the crossroads. Since the end of military rule in 1999, successive elected governments have done little to translate the country's immense natural wealth into tangible gains for the majority of Nigerian citizens, more than half of whom subsist on less than a dollar a day. The outcome of 2011 general elections shows that the country is moving toward sustenance of democracy which will invariably bring about development

Corruption is certainly one of the greatest obstacles to development and demand for good governance is increasing world-wide (Langseth, 1999).

Combating corruption is instrumental to the broader goal of achieving more effective, fair, and efficient government. When there is inadequate transparency, accountability, and probity in the use of public resources, the state fails to generate credibility and authority. Systemic corruption undermines the credibility of democratic institutions and counteracts good governance. There is a high correlation between corruption and an absence of respect for human rights, and between corruption and undemocratic practices. Corruption alienates citizens from their government.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Democracy cannot be predicated on a fragile and unstable political base. Corruption, the paper argues has been responsible for the fragility and volatility of democracy in Nigeria. Corruption has greatly eroded the fundamental values of democracy and the essential principle that government should be representative and accountable to the citizens.

Corruption in all its ramifications is severe and has permeated the Nigerian society. The prevalence and preponderance of corruption activities in Nigeria dates back to the early

independence period but it has since 1999 burgeoned to unprecedented proportion. Corruption as noted by Obuah (2010) occurs primarily when there is a failure of established institutions and the lack of capacity by these institutions to manage frameworks of social, justice, political and economic checks and balances. In trying to understand the ramifications and severity of corruption in Nigeria, the paper noted that although a clinical understanding of corruption in Nigeria requires an application of all the models on the explanation of the causes of corruption, both the institutional and rent-seeking theories offer deeper insights into the systemic nature of corruption.

Corruption is like cankerworm that easily eats deep into the social and moral fabric of any society or nation. Incidentally, corrupt practices sometimes take place in such a subtle and insidious manner that they may be unnoticed for a long time after they must have taken deep roots. That is why individuals should constantly be on guard in the course of social, business or political transactions by noting and clarifying uncertain nuances and in particular, making “scepticism” their watch word. That corruption can be stemmed is a reality. This makes one optimistic that in spite of its being a major feature of our social life, we are not born corrupt. We learn it through socialisation and we can unlearn it through the process of re-socialisation and by instituting an effective machinery to detect and punish the offence through an appropriate and prompt sanction (Omoluabi, 2007).

The negative effect of corruption on Nigeria’s development is enormous. “corruption as a scourge hinders development and poses threats to democracy” (Olufayo, 2006). Eradicating this ugly monster is a task that must be done and urgently too. Corruption in Nigeria is costing the country so much and restricting its development. The consequences and effects are also on the increase side. In a bid to improve Nigeria’s reputation and ensure an environment conducive to rapid economic and political development, Nigeria must be prepared to look inward at tackling the problems that is besetting the country for a long time. Invariably, the Nigerian political leaders as it is presently constituted lack the moral fibres to champion the cause of the Nigerian society. When political leaders are perceived to be pursuing their personal interests excessively, citizens become disenchanted, questioning the legitimacy of leaders and the state, and even the legitimacy of the process and system that produced them. This is what constitutes democratic instability (Ogundiya, 2010).

Government officials should be equipped with better education and training and a sound orientation about value systems and democratic cultures. Thus, they are required to be truly democratic administrators, real service providers, efficient decision makers, and dynamic grassroots transformers. They should, also, endeavour to imbibe real democratic practice in order to promote value systems and democratic ethos.

Democratic institutions must be allowed to develop capacity for curbing the excesses of the political class; reformation of the electoral process should be promoted in order to build confidence in the people about the entire democratic process; social and economic rights of the citizens should be guaranteed; just as they need to be orientated on the importance of peaceful co-existence. Putting all these in place, it is, expected, will go a long way in building a durable and sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

So far, this paper has examined democracy and its undeniably delicate complexities. It has made efforts to show that no form of government comes without challenges, but that democracy as of yet, has the best of prospects in strive for development; more so for a country like Nigeria ravaged by hunger, diseases and ignorance. It has equally shown that democracy can only be meaningful if anchored on a leadership with the requisite character and competence to deal with the continent's teething problems (Wiredu, 2010). As a form of government that embraces diversity and plurality in the society, guaranteeing equality of the citizens and their involvement in how they are governed, democracy remains the best system which accommodates development. Democracy has its own problems, but society must not relent at improving on them. Here, the famous saying that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty" becomes highly apposite. The entrenchment and sustenance of democracy is thus a 21st century imperative for Nigerian development.

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