Summary

Corruption is a complex, omnipresent and multi-faceted phenomenon with multiple causes and effects and takes on various forms in different contexts. Corruption impedes development and reduces the capacity of nations to banish poverty and add value to the lives of their citizens. Given the damaging consequences of corruption, it is a problem which solution cannot be put to another day. The enormity of corruption in Nigeria probably necessitated the establishment of anti-corruption agencies such as the Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), to nip the scourge in the bud. However, despite these institutional interventions, the fight against corruption in Nigeria seems nowhere close to being won. This paper presents the causes and consequences of corruption in Nigeria. Empirical evidence indicates that the absence of political will and the weakness of anti-corruption institutions to prosecute high profile culprits, the tardiness on the part of the country’s courts to promptly dispose of corruption cases and lack of accountable and transparent leadership, have undermined efforts to win the war against corruption. The paper recommends strict enforcement of anti-corruption laws, establishment of special courts for corruption cases and enthronement of good governance, as part of strategies to strengthen the anti-corruption crusade in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a worldwide phenomenon. It is a common malaise that ravages both the developing and advanced societies, despite their structural and cultural differences. Corruption is found in the various stages of human development; political, economic, judicial etc. Otite (1983) has noted that even though the ubiquity of corruption is otherwise acknowledged, its magnitude and character are defined by different social and cultural contexts and time frames.
Wraith and Simpkins (1963) have shown that corruption has been with societies throughout history. They point out, for instance, that 19th century Britain was marked by great corruption just as Smith (1964) has shown the extent and character of corruption in pre-Nigerian Hausa societies.

For some people, corruption, especially in Africa, is an adaptation of the traditional cultural practice of gift-giving in return for favours. The need to be corrupt derives from the obligation to help others in need, to educate one’s children and those of relatives, feed kinsmen and organize feasts and funerals, etc (Otite, 1983). However, Africans distinguish gift-giving and other forms of social exchanges from bribes and corrupt practices. As Otite argues, where gift giving is made part of modern transaction, the real intentions to infringe and pervert rules may be concealed by continuity with an old custom.

Although corruption remains a global challenge to the quest for development and welfare, it is a recurring theme in the African discourse. The Nigerian scenario and experience provide a useful illustration of the nuances surrounding corruption and how it interfaces with the state and the struggle for development. Nigeria, like most African states, appears to be at a cross road. It is ridden with crisis and contradictions. The crisis is multifaceted and entails issues of good governance, economic deprivation, underdevelopment, political violence and ethno-religious and communal crisis.

Nigeria is endowed with enormous material and human resources. It is the largest oil producer in Africa and the sixth largest in the world. However, despite its material wealth, Nigeria has been rated as one of the poorest countries in the world (as majority of its people live below the poverty line of less than US$1 per day, with some in absolute poverty), Gross Domestic Product, (GDP), per capita income stands at $1300, for a population of well over 140 million people (UNESCO, 2006, NPC, 2006).

The depth of the crisis is evident in the massive unemployment and a general lack of opportunities for economic ventures, low living standards, devalued currency and a failure to meet the health, food, habitat and security needs of majority of its people. The economic situation in Nigeria is such that most parents are unable to care for and properly feed their families.

At the heart of these crises is the problem of corruption. Ikubaje (2006) noted that corruption has become so prevalent in Nigeria that almost all governance crises, economic woes and development predicaments are attributed to the scourge of corruption.

Against this backdrop, Nigeria’s return to democratic governance in 1999 raised public expectations regarding a holistic battle against corruption in both the public and private domains and in the management of national resources.
Perhaps, it was the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo, which, more than any other regime in Nigeria’s political history made an open declaration to exorcise the ghost of corruption in Nigeria. President Obasanjo, on assumption of office on May 29, 1999, singled out corruption as the greatest bane of Nigeria, and promised to tackle the problem head long such that “it will not be business as usual” (Omotola, 2006: 215). This paper examines the causes and consequences of corruption in Nigeria with a view to proffering solutions to the menace.

THE PROBLEM

Corruption constitutes a canker worm that has eaten deep into the entire fabric of Nigeria’s social system. Successive governments have taken diverse steps to nip the scourge in the bud albeit with debatable degrees of success. Despite the celebrated declaration of war against corruption, Nigeria’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI) appears to continually go down. For instance, the Transparency International in its Corruption Perception Index, CPI ranked Nigeria as the second most corrupt nation in the world for three consecutive years: 2001, 2002 and 2003 (ICPC, 2007). In 2006, Nigeria was ranked as the twenty-first (21st) most corrupt country, globally. In the 2009 global corruption perception index, released by the global anti-corruption agency, Nigeria dropped from its 121st place in 2008 to 130th position, out of the 180 countries surveyed.

The report of the 2011 CPI released by the global anti-corruption watch dog in December 2011 showed that Nigeria emerged 143 among the 183 nations covered by the survey with a score of 2.4 on a scale of 10 points. The 2012 CPI ranked Nigeria as the 135th most corrupt nation out of the 178 countries surveyed, scoring 27% out of a possible 100%. As with the 2012 report, the 2013 CPI for Nigeria did not show any cause for celebration. The report indicated that Nigeria ranked as the 144th most corrupt nation out of the 177 countries indexed, scoring 27% out of 100%. For the 2014 CPI report, Nigeria which is regarded as Africa’s largest economy, was rated by the Transparency International as the 136th most corrupt country out of 175 nations covered by the survey with yet a score of 27% out of a possible 100% ((See “Corruption Perception Index” @ http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/survey_indices/cpi).

Rightly or wrongly, the seeming failure of the war against corruption in Nigeria may not be unconnected with the epileptic nature of political will on the part of the political leadership as well as the weakness of relevant institutions charged with the responsibility of being at the vanguard of the war. This probably explains why skeptical eyebrows are raised whenever the war against corruption is paraded as one of the success stories of the government.

It is in view of these foregoing problems that this paper examined the causes and persistence of corruption in Nigeria. In doing this we raised a number of questions such as: (1) what are the root causes of corruption in Nigeria? (2) What
are the institutional mechanisms put in place to check the scourge of corruption in Nigeria? (3) How effective are those mechanisms and (4) What are the consequences of corruption on Nigeria’s socio-economic, political and infrastructural development?

On the flipside, this paper attempted to identify the causes of corruption in Nigeria; identify the institutional responses to the menace, determine the effectiveness of those mechanisms and determine the consequences of corruption on Nigeria’s overall development.

To put the discussion in proper focus, this paper is divided into several parts. After an introduction, a statement of the problem, theoretical framework and the methodology, part two discusses the broad issues of understanding corruption; corruption in Nigeria, causes of corruption in Nigeria and Nigerian government’s intervention in the fight against corruption. Part three examines the consequences of corruption while the final segment of the paper concludes with recommendations on measures for eradicating or mitigating the spectre of corruption in Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is presented from a sociological perspective. Our theoretical framework is derived from the dialectical materialist area of study. Dialectical materialism is a philosophy that rejects the idealist explanation of social and other phenomena and suggests that all phenomena are material. The notion of dialectics, expresses the view that development depends on the clash of contradictions and the creation of a new, more advanced synthesis out of these classes. The dialectical materialist theory of corruption sees corruption as an aspect of class exploitation which can only be explained and understood in terms of the general structures of capitalist development. By linking corruption with the specific socio-economic structures of society, the theory brings out very clearly, the implications of the various strategies of development on the level of corruption (Nkom, 1983). According to this theory capitalist ideology recognizes the private accumulation of wealth as the highest form of human endeavor and therefore institutionalizes exploitation and materialistic tendencies. The dialectical materialist theory of corruption argues that capitalism encourages and perpetuates corruption by extolling precisely those bourgeois instincts of man which are associated with corruption such as greed, materialism and the desire to take advantage of other people.

Bala Usman (1979) located the actual root of corruption and indiscipline in Nigeria in the capitalist organization of production anchored on individualism, materialism and the large scale transfer of socially-produced wealth into the private hands of a decadent ruling class. The dialectical materialist theory of corruption is particularly useful because it helps us to better understand and by extension, be
in a position to explain the root causes, manifestations, victims and consequences of corruption in Nigeria.

**Methodology**

This paper relied on secondary sources of data. In drawing up conclusions for this study, the researcher consulted and made use of literature from research reports, textbooks, institutional publications, the internet and journals, among others. The study used content analysis method to analyze the data gathered from the aforementioned secondary literature sources.

**UNDERSTANDING CORRUPTION**

Corruption is a complex, omnipresent and multifaceted phenomenon with multiple causes and effects and takes on various forms and functions in different contexts. The tendency of corruption ranges from the single act of a payment contradicted by law to an endemic malfunction of a political and economic system. The problem of corruption has been seen as a structural problem of political, economic, cultural and an individual malaise.

The concept, corruption, is originally from the Latin verb, *rumpere* which means to break (Abdul-Ismail, n.d). In Colin Nye’s classical definition; corruption is “behaviour that deviates from the formal duties of a public role (elective or appointive) because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) wealth or status” (Nye, 1967:416).

Corruption is conventionally understood and referred to, as the private wealth seeking behaviour of someone who represents the state or the public authority. The encyclopedic and working definitions used by the World Bank, Transparency International and others, is that corruption is the abuse of public power for private gain. Another widely used description is that corruption is a transaction between private and public sector actors through which collective goods are illegitimately converted into private use-regarding pay-offs (Heidenheimer, Johnston and Levine, 1989).

The World Bank provides an all inclusive and comprehensive definition of corruption as:

The abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abused for private gain when an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantages or profit. Public office can also be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, the theft of assets, or the diversion of state resources (in Agbu, 2003:3).
Samuel Huntington has noted that where political opportunities are scarce, corruption occurs as people use wealth to buy power and where economic opportunities are little, corruption occurs when power is used to pursue wealth (Huntington, 1968). Lawal (2007) has said that the menace of corruption is beginning to receive increased local, national and international attention, in part, due to: (1) series of high level corruption cases in industrialized countries; (2) an increasing awareness of the costs of corruption throughout the world and, (3) the political and economic changes which many countries are undergoing.

From the plethora of definitions above, it can be safely concluded that corruption is a cancerous phenomenon which perverts public interest and retards development.

CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Several scholars have argued that the popular diagnosis of the root of Nigeria’s political and economic underdevelopment is the fact of pervasive corruption in public and private life. One of such scholars, Onoge (1983), noted that when the Nigerian military made its political debut by subordinating other organs of the state to itself in 1966, the war against corruption was a core aspect of its raison d’etre. Onoge quoted Major Kaduna Nzeogwu in his celebrated broadcast of January 15, 1966 as proclaiming inter alia:

The aim of the Revolutionary Council is to establish a strong, united and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife… our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten percent, those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers or VIPs at least, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles, those that have corrupted our society and pull the calendar back by their words and deeds (Ademoyega, 1981:87-89, in Onoge, 1983).

As it is well known, this ‘voluntary’ crusade against corruption has become a staple item in the social curricular of successive “corrective” dictatorships in contemporary Africa. The Nigerian state in both civilian and militarized form has been quite loud in this show of concern with the problem of corruption. Poster campaigns have been waged frequently against giving and taking bribes especially with regards to civilian transactions with the baton-carrying constable, the lower class sector of the Nigerian police establishment. In addition, “Let us pray” revivalism against the demon of corruption has been canvassed periodically by governors, (military and civilian), while commissions of enquiry have become established rituals at both local and national levels.
Evidence in the literature suggests that corruption is not a new or recent development in Nigeria. Corruption is as old as civilization itself (Aluko, 2009). Omotola (2006) traces corruption in Nigeria to colonialism, arguing that colonialism in Nigeria was built on corruption. This is to the extent that “because of the colonialists’ corrupt disposition to exploit the state for their exclusive benefit, they liquidated social structures against corruption associated with pre-colonial Africa and replaced and or transformed those to their own purposes” (2006:217).

Aluko agrees no less with Omotola. According to him the colonial era was characterized by allegations of corrupt practices against civil servants and police officers. This colonial legacy was believed to have been carried into the independence period (Aluko, 2009). Chinua Achebe, the famous Nigerian novelist, also highlighted the incidence of corruption in Nigeria in some of his novels (Achebe, 1960, 1966, and 1988). Egwemi (2010) noted that Achebe’s literary presentation of corruption indicates the extent and damaging effect of corruption on Nigeria and her people.

Wikipedia (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/corruption_in_Nigeria), has given the following analyses of corruption in Nigeria, as discussed below:

**Pre-independence Nigeria and the First Republic**

Corruption though prevalent was kept at manageable levels during the First republic. However, the cases of corruption during the period were beclouded by political infighting.

Azikiwe was the first major political figure investigated for questionable practice. In 1944, a firm belonging to Azikiwe and family bought a bank in Lagos. The bank was procured to strengthen local control of the financial industry. Albeit, a report about the transactions carried out by the bank showed that Azikiwe had resigned as chairman of the bank; the then chairman was an agent of his. The report noted that most of the paid-up capital of the African Continental Bank was from the Eastern Regional Financial Corporation.

In Western Nigeria, politician Adelabu Adegoke was investigated following charges of political corruption leveled against him by the opposition. The report led to demand for his resignation as district council head. In Northern region, against the back drop of corruption allegations leveled against some native authority officials in Borno, the Northern Government enacted the Customary Presents Order to forestall any further breach of regulations. Later on, it was the British administration that was accused of corrupt practices in the result of the elections which enthroned a Fulani political leadership in Kano. Reports later linking the British authorities to electoral irregularities were discovered.

**The Gowon Administration (1966-1975)**
Corruption for the most part of Gowon’s administration was kept away from public view until 1975. However, some informed officials voiced concerns. Gowon’s critics labeled his governors as misguided individuals acting like Lords overseeing their personal chieftdom. He was viewed as timid in terms of being decisive against corrupt elements in his government. In 1975, a corruption scandal surrounding the importation of cement engulfed his administration. Many officials of the defense ministry and the central bank were involved in the scandal. The officials were later accused of falsifying ships’ manifests and inflating the amount of cement to be procured.

**The Murtala Administration (1975-1976)**

In 1975, the administration of Murtala Muhammed later went on reformist changes. After a coup putsch brought him into power, the government sacked a large number of government officials and civil servants, many of whom had been criticized for the misuse of power they wielded without much recourse to due process.

**The Shagari Administration (1979-1983)**

Corruption was deemed pervasive during the administration of Shagari. A few federal buildings went on fire after investigators started probing the finances of officials working in the buildings. Late 1985, investigations into the collapse of the defunct Johnson Mathey Bank of London shed some light on some of the abuses carried on during the second republic. The bank acted as a conduit for some party members in Nigeria. A few leading officials and politicians had amassed large amounts of money. They sought to transfer the money out of the country with the help of Asian importers by issuing import licenses.

In 1981, a rice shortage led to accusations of corruption against the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) government. The shortages and subsequent allegations were precipitated by protectionism. After his election, the Nigerian government decided to protect the local rice farmer from imported commodities. A licensing system was created to limit the amount of rice import. However, accusations of favoritism and government sponsored speculations were leveled against many officials.

**The Buhari Administration (1983-1985)**

In 1985, a cross section of political gladiators was convicted of different corrupt practices under the government of General Buhari. However, the administration itself was involved in a few instances of lapsed ethical judgment. It is on record according to Wikipedia, that the General himself was on his way to removing a
colonel from the army before his exit from power. It added that even though the removal may signal a hard-line on corruption, it is a far cry from the 10-22 years of imprisonment that politicians under Shagari were sentenced to.

The Babangida Administration (1985-1993)

The regime of General Ibrahim Babangida is seen as the body that legalized corruption since his administration refused to account for the gulf war windfall estimated to be $12.4 billion; he rigged the only successful election in the history of Nigeria on June 12, 1993; he lives in a very exquisite mansion in his home state (Niger State) in the Northern part of the country.

The Abacha Administration (1993-1998)

The death of General Sani Abacha according to Wikipedia, revealed the extent of global involvement in graft in the country. A French investigation of bribes paid to government officials to ease the award of a gas plant construction in Nigeria revealed the global level of official graft in the country. The investigations led to the freezing of accounts containing about US$100 billion.

In 2000, two years after his death, a Swiss banking Commission reportedly indicted Swiss banks for failing to follow compliance process in allowing family and friends of Abacha access to accounts and deposition amounts totaling $600m into the accounts. The same year, a total of more than $1 billion were found in various accounts throughout Europe (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/corruption in Nigeria).

Aside from some of the past instances of regime-specific cases of corruption in Nigeria highlighted above, some high profile cases of sleaze came to light during the public hearing of the Adhoc-committee set up by the country’s House of Representatives to probe the administration of fuel subsidy in Nigeria. (Oluwasegun and Anofi, 2012). The Farouk Lawan adhoc-committee was set up, following the nationwide strike embarked upon on January 6, 2012 by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) to protest the withdrawal of fuel subsidy and the subsequent increase in the pump price of petrol from N65 to N143 per litre by the Federal government. The pump price was however, later reduced to N97 per litre by President Goodluck Jonathan, after striking a deal with organized labour to call off the strike.

When the committee began the first leg of its public assignment on Monday, January 16th, 2012, a host of prominent public officers among them, Diezani Alison-Madueke, Minister of Petroleum, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Minister of Finance, Austin Oniwon, then, Group Managing Director of the Nigerian National
Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and Reginald Stanley, Executive Secretary, Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) appeared before it.

The Committee discovered that the figures presented on the actual daily domestic fuel consumption in Nigeria by key government officials and major players in the oil industry who appeared before it were conflictory. For instance, while Reginald Stanley, PPPRA’s boss claimed that the government paid subsidy on 59 million litres of petrol daily, Deizani claimed that payments were made on 35 million litres. The PPPRA Executive Secretary told the committee that while Nigeria imported 59 million litres of fuel on a daily basis, only 35 million litres were consumed in the country adding that 24 million litres of petrol were smuggled to neighboring countries on a daily basis. He explained that the payment and smuggling had been going on since 2006 (Oluwasegun and Anofi, 2012).

Reacting to the PPPRA’s figures, the Chairman of the ad-hoc committee reportedly bemoaned a situation whereby the consumption level of the country is known but certain people still import extra and pay subsidy on it, describing such practice as corrupt and criminal.

The law maker said:

Taking 2011 for instance, per day discharge was 59 million litres and consumption from what was presented to us here was an average of 35 million litres per day. What that means is that there is a gap of 24 million litres per day being funded by Nigerians as subsidy that was not utilized by them (Oluwasegun and Anofi 2012:7).

The Committee chairman continued:

This of course, amounts to over payment, or in order wards, sharp practices, while we are paying for 59 million litres per day, instead of 35 million litres per day. Someone, somewhere, is being shortchanged. That is, Nigerians, by 24 million litres per day (Oluwasegun and Anofi, 2012:7).

However, shortly after submitting its report to the House of Representatives in plenary, in June 2012, information filtered into the public domain via the media about the integrity of the report, suggesting a bribe-for-clearance deal between the Chairman of the Ad-hoc-committee, Hon. Farouk Lawan and some big time oil magnates whose companies were allegedly indicted in the fuel subsidy scandal. Lawan Farouk was brought into public spectacle in a sting operation which centered on a $3 million bribe. He was alleged to have in his capacity as the Chairman of the House of Representatives ad-hoc Committee on fuel subsidy, demanded and received $620, 000, as part payment of a $3 million bribe to
exonerate Femi Otedola and his company, Zenon Petroleum and Gas, from indictment in the investigations into the subsidy scam by oil importers.

After series of claims and counter claims between him and Otedola, Lawan admitted that he collected $620,000 from Mr. Otedola to doctor the panel’s report. He told journalists that he collected the money after Otedola approached him, adding that he informed the police and his colleagues about it (Wikipedia, 2013, Retrieved 07/02/2013). Following this admission, Lawan was removed as the Chairman of the committee. Meanwhile, the embattled former Chairman of the ad-hoc committee was on Friday, February 1, 2013, dragged before a High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja by the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, ICPC, on a seven count criminal charge in violation of the Corrupt Practices and Other related Offences Act, 2000 (http://dailyindependent.com. Retrieved 06/02/2013.)

CAUSES OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Corruption has a long history in the development of human societies. Various commentators have tried to explain how corruption arose. One such commentator is Emmanuel Ayoola, a retired justice of the Nigerian Supreme Court and immediate past Chairman of the Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). In a work titled “Frequently Asked Questions on ICPC”, Ayoola (2007), attributed the menace of corruption in Nigeria to greed, nepotism, lack of positive values, weak enforcement mechanisms, excessive materialism, societal pressure, lack of virile security structures, insecurity in employment tenure, etc.

He added that corruption sprouts and thrives in situations where office holders enjoy large discretionary powers in a monopolistic situation with no mechanism for accountability. Ayoola reduced this dynamic to the mathematical formula popularized by Robert Klitzgaard as C = D + M - A (Corruption= Discretion + Monopoly - Accountability (Ayoola, 2007:10). In addition to the above reasons, there are three popular schools of thought as to why there is corruption in the Nigerian society:

(1) that which sees corruption in society as inevitable;
(2) that which attributes corruption to poverty; and
(3) that which regards corruption as a way of life (Ottong, 1983).

The three frames of thought are closely interrelated and are not discussed in isolation but as interrelated processes which explain the phenomenon of official corruption. There appears to be a popularly held opinion that corruption is inevitable in human society. It is argued that by his nature, man wants to be noticed and appreciated especially when he performs commendable acts. It is also asserted that man in the course of his interaction with others always desires one kind of favour or the other. From a purely psychological perspective this seems to
present a true picture of man but it does not appear to provide enough and sufficient rationale for the practice of corruption. In everyday life, appreciation is demonstrated in the expression of “thanks” verbally or in written form as well as in the form of gifts. Such expressions of appreciation are conducive to good human relations and enhance the process and prospects of social interaction.

However, the problem as it relates to corruption is that expression of appreciation is increasingly taking the form of gifts with intent to influence the course of action or decision. In many instances gifts are not without strings, they are either expressions of appreciation for action already performed, or in anticipation of a favour to be done. Since the desire for favour and appreciation appears inherent in human nature, the school of thought that sees corruption as inevitable argues that it is a matter of degree.

Obviously, it is the strong desire for favour or appreciation that gave rise to various forms of gratification which in contemporary society such as Nigeria appears to have reached alarming proportions. The major problem in this regard is that in official circles, there is hardly any form of gift or favour that does not imply ulterior motives and where the practice obtains, the general tendency is to corrupt.

The second school, according to Ottong, which sees corruption as a corollary of Nigerian poverty, theorizes that Nigerian public servants demand and receive various forms of gratification in cash and kind because their pay packets are very meager. For instance, the Nigerian Police force is generally regarded as a corrupt system, a situation that is believed to be attributable to the poor pay structure in the system. Although the situation has improved in recent times, the demand for all forms of gifts such as the “roger” phenomenon at police check points still persists. The means to increase one's earnings are generally legitimate and border on fraud, misappropriation and downright bribery (Ottong, 1983). Given the nature of the Nigerian state and the level of her social and economic development, he said, it is a fact that only very few public servants earn incomes that meet their responsibilities and obligations.

This appears to give the “theory of poverty” as it relates to corruption, some semblance of plausibility. The reasoning, in our view, cannot be empirically sustained, however, because it is not the poorest category of Nigerian workers who are the most corrupt. In fact, the really poor category of workers are not strategically placed to use their official positions to attract gratifications to themselves, rather it is the relatively “better off” category of public servants who are so disposed. There is no doubt that poverty might be a contributory factor to corrupt practices, but corruption is obviously not a function of poverty. The perpetuation of corruption in Nigeria can be blamed on the values of society, which include the worship of money and a mania for material wealth. These rather misplaced values appear to have caught contemporary Nigeria as an epidemic. In
a system where success and social standing are measured by the amount of wealth an individual controls, society tends to be ambivalent about the means for the attainment of success.

The third category, which rationalizes corruption as a way of life, according to Ottong (1983), is the tendency for the Nigerian society to see corruption as a bad practice but feels helpless to change it. Given the seeming degree of indiscipline in all sectors of the Nigerian society, public and private, coupled with the level of fraudulent practices, embezzlement, nepotism, discrimination and increasing crime rates, many people feel that there is no solution to the malaise of corruption. Indeed, a rather defeatist argument seems to hold sway that many individuals should be given the opportunity to serve not necessarily to correct the system but to spread the benefits of the system to all.

Nigerian Government’s anti-corruption Campaign.

As a nation, Nigeria has never been in short supply of institutional measures to fight corruption. The earliest legal instruments designed to fight cases of official corruption were the Penal Code, applicable in the northern part of Nigeria and the Criminal Code, applicable in the south. Successive military regimes and their civilian opposites have experimented with several alternatives. But as Akanbi (2004:3) has noted “not a single case of corruption is known to have been prosecuted in the regular or superior court of record under these laws”. Mustapha Akanbi, former chairman of the Independent Corrupt practices Commission (ICPC) listed some of the past measures to combat corruption in Nigeria to include:

(a) The Public Officers (Investigation of Assets) Decree N0. 5 of 1966 meant to address and eradicate corruption as part of a nine-point programme of General Gowon’s regime;
(b) The Corrupt Practices Decree of 1975 under which public office holders were tried for abuse of office by a 3-man panel headed by Dr. Adebibe that investigated and examined their assets:
(c) The 1979 constitutional provision for a code of conduct for public officers, a Code of Conduct Bureau for the enforcement of such proscribed behaviour, and a Code of Conduct Tribunal;
(d) Ethical revolution initiated by the Shagari administration where a Minister of cabinet rank was put in charge of National Guidance to address the state of corruption in Nigeria;
(e) War Against Indiscipline, launched by the Buhari and Idiagbon regime, under which fraudulent and corrupt people were brought to book;
(f) A National Committee on Corruption and Other Economic Crimes in Nigeria drafted the Corrupt Practices and Economic Crimes Decree in 1990. The Decree provided for a wide scope of economic crimes, wide range of public officers who
must declare their assets and an Independent Commission against Corruption. However, it was one framework that never got past the draft stage; 

(g) The Indiscipline, Corrupt Practices and Economic Crimes (Prohibition) Decree of 1994, the Failed Bank Decree and Tribunal as well as the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Decree of 1996, all constituted the anti-corruption policy framework of the Abacha regime.

Beyond these, other notable policy measures to combat corruption in Nigeria include the Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), established to sensitize Nigerians about the evils of corruption, and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) founded to wage war on illegal drug deals both by the Babangida regime. There was also the War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC) and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) of the Abacha regime, saddled with the responsibility of socialization and popular sensitization and mobilization of Nigerians towards positive change.

Apart from the above measures, the return to democratic governance in 1999 saw the civilian administration institute other initiatives to fight corruption. One of these was the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). The ICPC was set up and empowered by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000 which was signed into law by then President Olusegun Obasanjo, on June 13, 2000. Another institutional corruption - bursting mechanism put in place by the same administration was the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2002. The EFCC bill, which was eventually passed and signed into law in 2002, became known as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act 2002.

However, over a decade after the establishment of the EFCC and other anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria, the war against corruption appears to be nowhere close to being won. This is because some critics believe that these agencies have not done enough to turn the tide against corruption in Nigeria. Part of their misgivings is that these agencies were mere tools in the hands of successive Nigerian presidents to hound and harass their perceived enemies.

CONSEQUENCES OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

The costs of corruption on a country like Nigeria, which is widely acknowledged as the largest black nation in the world, are profound and enormous. These effects can be analyzed from three main perspectives: the political, economic and socio-cultural (Lawal, 2007). From the political standpoint, corruption has the capacity of engendering political instability; break down of law and order, brain drain, and inefficiency of the public service, among others. Viewed from the economic perspective, corruption is no doubt an enemy of economic development. In the
international scene, it gives a country like Nigeria poor image in interpersonal and business relationships.

Moreover, a nation such as Nigeria that condones corruption is often besieged with a lot of economic and social vices. In the specific case of economic development, corruption limits economic growth because it reduces the amount of public resources, discourages private investment and savings and impedes the efficient use of government revenue and development assistance funds. Corruption also erodes governmental legitimacy because it hampers effective delivery of public goods and services. Ojaide (2000) noted that a corruption-ridden country may find itself in a situation where economic and infrastructural facilities are vandalized to create room for necessary replacement and purchases or conversion to personal use.

Other economic costs of corruption include the fact that trade and commerce may not thrive well, as investors may not be willing to invest much in trade or business, resulting in increase in the rate of inflation, unemployment, and decline in output, foreign reserves and deterioration in the standard of living of the people as it is the case in Nigeria presently. Although the direct cost of corruption may be high in terms of lost revenue or funds diverted from their intended use, the indirect costs in terms of economic distortions, inefficiencies and wastes resulting from corrupt practices are more problematic in the long run and this makes it difficult to address.

In the socio-cultural context, corruption, apart from engendering poverty has the capacity of changing the social values of a good and progressive society dramatically to nothing else than the crazy pursuit of wealth, power and social recognition. Lawal (2007) lamented that under such a circumstance, as is the case with Nigeria, people no longer appreciate the virtues of good morale, conduct and practices. Corruption deepens poverty and makes it difficult for ordinary people to survive. It is evident that the social and economic cost of corruption disproportionately affects the poor, who not only suffer from lack of service but who are also powerless to resist the demands of corrupt officials.

For Ndubisi (1983), all forms of corruption result in social tension between the haves and the have-nots, adding that one of the causes of social revolutions is corruption. He argued that the severity of such tensions and conflicts is determined by whether corruption has reached a systemic stage and the tolerant proclivity of the suffering masses. Ndubuisi, who drew a positive correlation between corruption and the French and Russian revolutions, added that the 1966, 1975, 1983, 1985 and subsequent coup d’etats in Nigeria were premised on the alleged corrupt practices of civilian and military regimes in the country. He added a sarcastic tone to the issue by saying that the only positive social effect of corruption is the satisfaction, love and respect that exist among partners in corruption and those who derive financial or material benefits from it.
In his major study of corruption, Noonan (1984:700) asserted that “next to tyranny, corruption is the great disease of government.” We agree completely with Noonan.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

This study examined the causes and consequences of corruption in Nigeria, with a view to identifying the factors responsible for the persistence of the monster. The study posed a number of questions, among them; (1) What are the root causes of corruption? (2) What are the institutional mechanisms put in place to stem the ugly tide and (3) how effective are these mechanisms? One of the major findings of the study is that which attributed the failure of the anti-corruption war in Nigeria to lack of political will on the part of the government and the weakness of the anti-corruption institutions to prosecute corrupt persons, especially Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) such as governors, ministers, members of the national assembly and other highly placed political office holders.

From the study, it was discovered that there is little prospect of the menace of corruption being eliminated from Nigeria in the nearest future unless factors such as lack of autonomy for the EFCC and other similar anti-corruption institutions and deficit of accountability in governance, which precipitate the cankerworm are adequately addressed. Another finding from the study attributed the persistence of corruption in Nigeria to factors ranging from poverty, primitive accumulation of wealth, poor reward system to the breakdown in the country’s core moral values.

Also revealed by the study is the fact that unnecessary delays by Nigerian courts in trying and convicting corruption suspects as well as the granting of perpetual injunctions have direct bearing on the prevalence of cases of corruption in the country. Arising from the above, the following recommendations are made to stem the tide of corruption in Nigeria:

(1) It is clear from literature that one of the greatest obstacles to the realization of the anti-corruption campaign in Nigeria is the lack of political will on the part of the EFCC and other anti-corruption institutions in Nigeria to prosecute high profile persons involved in corruption cases especially cases against Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) such as governors, ministers and members of the national assembly. It is hereby recommended that the Nigerian government should demonstrate appropriate political will by strengthening its anti-corruption agencies to bring corrupt persons, irrespective of their status to justice. As a matter of urgency, the EFCC in particular, should immediately appeal against the cases of all those who have been granted unconditional and perpetual injunctions by the regular courts particularly governors, ministers and members of the national
assembly and other political heavy weights in the country. This, done, will restore both local and international confidence in the anti-corruption campaign in Nigeria.

(2) Scholars and social commentators have pinned part of the fetters against the successful prosecution of the anti-corruption war in Nigeria on the delay by trial courts to expeditiously dispose of corruption cases and award of frivolous bails and adjournments *ad infinitum*. Appropriate legislations should be put in place to ensure that Special Courts, equipped with all the appurtenances of law are set up to specifically try corruption cases to boost the fight against corruption in Nigeria. The Special Courts should draw membership from the pool of retired Supreme Court justices, the Code of Conduct Bureau, the Code of Conduct Tribunal and the Nigeria Bar Association, NBA.

(3) One of the best ways to curb the incidence of corruption is to appeal to people’s conscience and raise their consciousness to the evil inherent in the scourge. The relevant anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria should embark on proactive massive public enlightenment and sensitization campaigns to canvass for attitudinal change from all and sundry. Civil society organizations should also be socialized and mobilized about their pivotal roles in the sensitization, mobilization and conscientization of the populace to the destructive effects of corruption on the country’s overall development.

(4) The greatest antidote to corruption is good governance. Whatever measures that are put in place by the government must be those that promote good governance, accountability and transparency. This is the only framework that allows for reasonable degree of symbolic coherence between policy frameworks and their implementation. With good governance, available resources are effectively managed in response to the critical needs of society. It is simply the integrated focus and approach to the success of any war against corruption for sustainable development. Leaders at all levels of governance in Nigeria must demonstrate commitment to the enthronement of good governance through a transparent, accountable and people-oriented leadership.

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