

CHAPTER SEVEN

Corruption in Nigeria

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Introduction

Corruption has been a problem in Nigeria for long. It was, for instance, the subject of General Murtala Mohammed's coup in 1975, and subsequently part of the reasons given for military takeovers ever since (Okoosi-Simbine, 1993). Several literatures have documented the large-scale political corruption that pervaded the Second Republic (Lewis et al. 2001: 55) and subsequent governments in Nigeria. Nuhu Ribadu, former chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), estimates that over \$380 billion has been expropriated by Nigeria's political and military leaders since oil sales began in the 1970s.¹

Given the ubiquity of the problem of corruption, the Obasanjo administration sworn in on 29 May 1999 promised to tackle the problem head-on. Immediately upon taking office, one of the executive's first bills the president sent to the National Assembly was an anti-corruption bill. As a result, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the EFCC, among others, were established. Unfortunately, the fight against corruption has been fraught with problems, and as a result, the tide of corruption is nowhere near waning. According to the U.S. State Department, corruption in Nigeria is "massive, widespread, and pervasive,"² and there is a "culture of impunity for political and economic crimes" that must be reversed if development is not to be stalled.³

The effect of corruption on a political system and a developing economy such as Nigeria's are undoubtedly negative and disastrous and will ultimately affect the process and pace of national development (Heidenheimer, 1977), including democratic governance. The pertinent questions then are as follows; how do we gauge the problem of corruption in Nigeria? How do Nigerians perceive corruption—its meaning, manifestations—and to what extent are they personally involved in the practice? What is their assessment of the government's efforts at curbing corruption, especially their evaluation of the ICPC, EFCC, and the practice of Due Process office among others, particularly, under the Obasanjo administration? Why, despite several efforts in the past and in the recent period, is corruption still a major problem? What specifically are the effects of corruption on the country? What are the suggestions of Nigerians on how malfeasance can be minimized in the short term, if not completely eradicated in the long term? These are some of the questions this chapter addresses. Section two of the chapter undertakes a conceptual and theoretical analysis of corruption within a framework of democracy. Section three provides some evidences of corruption in Nigeria including analysis of the views of a small sample population on corruption. Section four examines current efforts at eradicating corruption in the country, while section five contains the conclusion and policy recommendations for curbing corruption.

Corruption: Conceptualization

Nye (1967) defines corruption as a behavior that deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private⁴ pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private⁵ benefits; Johnston (1997) sees it as the abuse of public roles or resources for private benefit. Doig and Theobald (1999: 3), on the other hand, distinguish between grand and petty corruption. In the case of the former, it involves highly placed individuals who exploit their positions to extract large bribes from big-time operators such as representatives of trans-national corporations, arms dealers, drug barons, and the like, who appropriate significant payoffs from contract scams, or who simply transfer large sums of money from the public treasury into private (usually overseas) bank accounts. The latter refers to "the extortion of small payments by low level officials in order to expedite business by cutting through red tape." Based on the interest that corruption serves, Heidenheimer (1989: 8–11) has a threefold classification. Thus, it may

be public office-centered (when a public office holder misappropriates official privilege for non-material benefits), public interest-centered (when the incumbent official indulges in corrupt practices to favor a group), and market-centered corruption (when corruption is perpetrated for material or financial benefits).

In essence, examples of corruption range from acceptance of money or other rewards for awarding contracts, violations of procedures to advance personal interests, including kickbacks from development and aid programs or multinational corporations, payoffs for legislative support; the diversion of public resources for private use, to overlooking illegal and unconstitutional activities, or intervening in the justice process, nepotism, common theft, over-pricing, establishing non-existing projects, pay roll padding, tax collection and tax assessment frauds, insider trading, name-dropping and influence peddling, and misappropriation (Okoosi-Simbine, 1993; Olopoenia, 1999: 19–20; De Sardan, 1999; Doig and Theobald, 1999). At times, these become so interwoven that identifying and distinguishing them in practice or for analytical purposes is difficult. However, a common feature of most definitions is their in-built tendency to be peremptorily evaluative and moralistic (Edoh, 2003). Nevertheless, it is widely known that it occurs in virtually all but especially the political realm; and is at times referred to as political corruption.

Irrespective of the sources of pressure, economically, corruption represents an arbitrary, exorbitant tax. It is most prevalent where there are all sorts of institutional inefficiency such as political instability,⁶ bureaucratic red tape as in the renewal of such an important identification document as a driver's license,⁷ and weak legislative⁸ and judicial systems.⁹ It thrives where there are trade restrictions; where government engages in favoritist industrial and business policies;¹⁰ and where there is large discretionary space available to public officials worsened by low salaries and wages.¹¹ In Rwanda, Paul Kagame's administration is dealing with the problem of corruption by addressing institutional efficiency through elimination of conditions that generate corruption—procurement and purchase of goods and services in the military, housing, transportation, and other sectors.¹²

According to Bailey (1969), political corruption relates to the misuse of authority; the use by government officials of their governmental powers for illegitimate private gain.¹³ Bribery, extortion, embezzlement, fraud, and conflict of interest are, for instance, clear examples of political corruption.¹⁴ Klaveren (1970: 38) defines it as a “method of exploitation by which a constituent part of the public sphere is exploited

as if it were part of the market sphere”; and that is often located within institutions of government, legislatures, courts, bureaucracies, and statutory bodies such as parastatals; and that manifests by transactions or exchanges of public resources and benefits between actors, some or all of whom are officials or public representatives. For the purposes of this chapter, political corruption is also viewed as all forms of irregular and improper activities that take place in the political sphere including campaign financing, checks and balances, civil liberties, structured competition in both political and economic realms, and so forth.

In terms of conceptualization, what exactly is the nature of the phenomenon in Nigeria and what peculiarities mark out its character? Corruption in Nigeria belongs to the realm of Robinson’s (1998) categorization as systemic or entrenched corruption that fits into societies with low political competition, low and uneven economic growth, a weak civil society, and the absence or ineffectiveness of institutional mechanisms to deal with it. It affects institutions and influences individual behavior at all levels. Corruption is embedded in specific socio-cultural environments; tends to be monopolistic; is organized and difficult to avoid. Apart from pervading all strata of society, corruption—giving/taking bribes, kickbacks, side payments, fraud, capital flight, looting, settlement, over-invoicing, and so on—has deposed democratic principles of probity and accountability as guidelines for official conduct. It is generally taken for granted by the overwhelming majority of Nigerians in almost every conceivable field of endeavor.

The fight against corruption under the Obasanjo administration appeared largely as a “one man (Obasanjo’s) show,” dependent on his stamina, moral reputation, administrative skill, and his commitment to succeed.¹⁵ Kpundeh (2004: 131), quoting Olowu (1993), warns that “the existence of political will to genuinely tackle corruption must not be assumed on the basis of policy pronouncements by political leaders. The most vocal often turn out to be the ones who aid and abet corruption most.”

In addition, the Nigerian Constitution, section 308 (1) (a) and (3), grants absolute immunity to the president, vice president, governor, and deputy governor while in office. The Senate passed the anti-corruption bill after inserting a clause that empowers an independent counsel to investigate any allegation of corruption against these categories of officials. If the administration were rarely serious, it would itself have sought appropriate constitutional amendments to forestall a situation in which a thieving vice president or state governor enjoys immunity until he leaves office.

Whatever the explanatory variable(s) for engagement in any forms of improper or selfish exercise of power and influence attached to a public or private office, that is to say, corruption, its effects are often damaging for any society. The April 2007 Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report pointed out that “due to decades of economic mismanagement, political instability, and widespread corruption, the education and social services systems have suffered from lack of funding, industry has idled, refineries are in poor state of disrepair and Nigeria, the sixth largest oil producing country in the world periodically suffers from severe fuel shortages.”¹⁶ These conditions for Nigerians, most of whom looked forward to democratic dividends in the form of better socio-economic welfare, cannot but temper their enthusiasm for democracy (Okoosi-Simbine, 2000).

Corruption in Nigeria's Political Life

During the Obasanjo administration from 1999 to 2007, several efforts were put in place to curb the menace of corruption. The president made statements to reinforce this message and took several public measures including the termination of contracts and land, house seizure, oil block allotments, and offshore oil exploration contracts (*This day*, 30 November 1999: 48, 57) that were made under previous military regimes, while efforts to recover ill-gotten gains from the Abacha era were also put in place. An anti-corruption bill (that is discussed later) was also presented to the National Assembly, and passed by the Legislature in February of 2000. Initially, these efforts were widely acclaimed by Nigerians (64% by the 2000 *Afrobarometer* survey), but within a short time waned as “Nigerians [48%] are more critical of government measures to combat corruption, and relatively more ambivalent about the progress that has been made since the change of government” (*Afrobarometer*, 2001: 57–58).

Corruption manifests in Nigeria's political life at virtually all levels of government and all sectors of society. Below is an illustration of the phenomenon within states and local governments, party politics and electoral processes, and the security agencies (Police).

State Governments

Corruption within the state governments, amounting to abuse of public resources, is quite high, retarding the development of many of the states, even when states' share of the federation account has been

raised. In particular, since 1999, some of the oil-producing states have reported revenues of up to \$1.3 billion per year but have dismal records of development or service delivery.¹⁷ One of such state governors¹⁸ was in September 2005 arrested by British authorities in London, and charged with money laundering. He was later tried in Abuja. Former governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau state was also indicted by the EFCC of stealing N1.6 billion of his state's ecological fund,¹⁹ while Governor Ayodele Fayose of Ekiti state was impeached for using his state's poultry project as conduit to siphon over N1 billion from the state treasury.²⁰

In May 2003, the former governor of Borno state was reported as giving six limousines to the state's monarchs "for their service to his administration, to thank them for working with him and ensuring peace in the state, and helping him to attain the successes that he achieved" (*The Guardian*, 28 May 2003). This was evidently a "soft" bribe to court the political support of the emirs.

The former state governor of Kogi state Mr. Audu was accused of acquiring property abroad, after he became governor in May 1999. The *Sunday Times* of 7 April 2002,²¹ provided evidence to the effect that the governor bought the property in 2001, raising issues on the possible source of the funds for the purchase of the property.

Local Governments and Other Government Agencies

At the local government level, on discovering that a wide gulf exists between allocated financial resources and the corresponding completed public works, the Technical Committee on the Review of the Structure of Local Governments in Nigeria indicted the third tier all over the federation of having failed in meeting the needs of the people going by the unaccounted huge amounts of monies allocated to them.²² Corruption also occurs within government agencies, ministries, and parastatals as seen in the report of the House Committee on Public Accounts that indicted government agencies of waste and corruption, including payoffs for legislative support and financial releases. Indeed, of fifteen agencies examined, only one agency's expenditure profile was found satisfactory (*The NEWS*, 21 March 2005: 26–28).

Misallocation of State Funds

According to the CRS (2007: 10), former Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha reportedly accumulated through corruption more than \$3.5 billion

during the course of his five years in power.²³ Of this, Switzerland, the first country to repatriate stolen funds to Nigeria, transferred an estimated \$505.5 million to Nigeria between 2005 and 2006. According to the World Bank, a significant percentage of those funds was used by the Nigerian government toward meeting the MDGs. The government has also recovered \$149 million of the stolen funds from the autonomous British Island of Jersey and an estimated \$150 million from Luxemburg. The level of poverty in the country, where most people live with less than \$1 a day, shows misallocation of funds and does not indicate prudent management of these funds that may have gone into other individuals' hands.

Corruption within Political Parties and the Political/Electoral process

Omelayo and Mokuolu (2005: 24) observed that political power is a major factor influencing corruption in Nigeria. Nowhere is that more evident than in the case of the Petroleum Technology Development Trust Fund (PTDF), which the former president and vice president (Obasanjo and Atiku) turned into slush funds for their party political campaigns during the 2003 general elections. According to Onyeoziri (2003: 14), politics in Nigeria is generally characterized by two dominant characteristics. "One is the weakness and arbitrariness of state behaviour and the other is the indiscipline and self-serving character of the political class who control the institutions or apparatuses of state. The combination of these two forces creates a political environment that is characterised by arbitrariness, instability, incompetence and lack of accountability." Corruption thus occurs within political parties and Okoosi-Simbine (2003, 2005, 2006a) examined the case of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the chief promoter of the anti-corruption program of the administration. At the level of politicking, controversy surrounded the 2006–2007 voter registration exercise, the certification of candidates, and poor logistical preparations for the elections. One Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) official allegedly admitted that the voters' register was "25–30% fiction" and reports of electoral malfeasance, or rigging, were also noted. Ballot box stuffing, falsification of election result forms, and threats of violence were among the most serious charges (CRS, 2007: 3–4). This caused the European Union delegation to note that "in at least six states the minimum standards for democratic elections were not met."²⁴

Pay-As-You-Go Police

Roberts and Okoosi-Simbine (2003: 86–111) have examined some of the problems of the police force that ought to protect citizens and the laws of the country in Nigeria. Petty corruption in the form of extortion that occurs among and within the rank and file of the force is very rampant. According to the business community in South Eastern Nigeria (Manufacturers Association of Nigeria) the amount of money extorted by security agents from road users in that part of the country was estimated at approximately N25 billion every year. According to the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), there are no fewer than eighteen road blocks from Owerri to Port Harcourt International Airport, a distance of eighty-eight kilometres! (*The Punch*, 6 August 2003: 16) At each of these road blocks²⁵ or check points, motorists, especially commercial ones, donate, contribute, or are simply expected to pay a token ten naira or lately (with inflation), twenty naira, that can simply be dropped without stopping. To the Mobile Police (MOPOL) in High Way Patrol Vehicles, no less than fifty naira is paid.

The Guardian (28 July 2003:1, 65; 30 July) reported a protest by mobile policemen in Osogbo, Osun state, against their Commanding Officer who was alleged to have ordered each of them on duty at road blocks to give him a sum of N5,000 as returns daily. Failure to do this attracts posting out of road blocks, arrests, and dismissal on trumped up charges.

The situation is not only bad among the rank and file, it is worse within the leadership that is at times believed to be behind the road side extortions of motorists. Indeed, a former Inspector General of Police (IGP) was accused of grand corruption by the EFCC and later convicted of stealing over N17 billion belonging to the Police Force.²⁶ Corruption within the force is also partly responsible for its inability to apprehend perpetrators of high profile and at times embarrassing (political) assassinations all over the country.²⁷ The essential point is that corruption in the police department poses serious challenge to public security, peace, and order in the country.

Analysis of Field Survey Data

A miniature survey of 20 respondents, purposively selected to represent different (elite) sectors of society and their views about the issue under investigation (corruption) was carried out. This is relevant, even

though Mundt and Aborisade (2001: 698) have concluded that the Nigerian public is highly ambivalent about the problem of corruption, frequently complaining but generally doing nothing or being resigned to its pervasive existence. In particular, respondents were chosen based on their professions, thus, one legislator, a policeman, a lawyer, a senior female civil servant, a male secondary school student, a female undergraduate, an unemployed male, an unemployed female, one middle-level female academic, a female youth corps member, a businessman, an artisan (welder), a female fashion designer, a taxi driver, a female office cleaner, two male academics, and two market women respectively were sampled. This was meant to gauge how citizens engaged in different activities experience or perceive corruption. The following paragraphs present the views expressed by respondents.

As indicated, 20 questionnaires were administered, however, only 19 could be analyzed and found useable. Virtually all respondents gave their views on what constitutes corruption and these agree with the explanations and examples given in sections on conceptualization and corruption in Nigeria's political life above. Sadly, only 3 of 19 (or 16%) respondents opine that corruption has reduced since 1999; 5 (or 26%) say there has been no change; while majority (11 or 58%) say it has worsened. Furthermore, corruption is believed by 12 respondents to have worsened in public (civil service) and private sectors, that is, everyday living. This is followed by the political sector that is ticked by as many as 7 of the respondents. In turn, it is said by 6 respondents respectively to have reduced in the private sector and in the Armed Forces.

A list of common manifestations of corruption in Nigeria today was provided respondents who may tick more than one to indicate which they consider as most common. These and the number of respondents indicating them include Financial Fraud/Crimes (18); Bribery (16); Exam Malpractice (13); Using official position for personal/group gain (12); Exchange of material gain (5); Delay/Denial of Justice (4) and Name dropping/Influence peddling (1). Some of these have already been discussed earlier; it is also interesting to note that exam malpractice is indicated by as many as 13 of 19 respondents, and clearly points to a negative educational development in the country, especially among youths, most of whom constitute approximately a third of this sample. Causes and conditions favorable to corruption are identified by respondents to be mainly Greed (11), poverty (5), and Lack of Non-implementation of Laws (3). Relatedly, the factors that conduce to corrupt activities in private or public office are said by majority of respondents (13 of 19) to be Lack of adequate societal/legal

requirements of accountability from office holders. Lack of Sanctions and Negative Social/Societal Values are indicated by 2 respondents respectively. What affects respondents' attitude to corruption mostly is the environment of "that is the way it is done" in which they (11 of 19 respondents) often find themselves. This is followed by "Compulsion/Duress" that is pointed at by 5 respondents. Not surprisingly, the most corrupt profession in Nigeria is believed by as many as 10 respondents to be the Police Force. It is interesting that even the policeman in the sample cited the police! These uniformed men are followed by Politicians (6) and Civil Servants (2). The remaining one respondent selected the business profession.

Religion and religiosity are considered to be factors that may influence peoples' moral conduct and behavior. Religion can act as an internal control for individuals who may be deterred from amoral conduct. We thus sought to know whether respondents' religion/religiosity have any impact on their attitude and vulnerability to corruption. Majority (53%) said "No," while the remaining 9 respondents (47%) said "Yes, it does." It should be noted that majority of respondents (14) are Christians and 4 are Muslims while 1 is an Eckist (Eckankar).²⁸

Among the three arms of government, corruption is considered to be mostly pronounced in the Executive arm (14 of 19 respondents) than in the judicial (3 respondents) or legislative (2 respondents) arms. Similarly, the level of government considered most corrupt is the state and local government with 37% of respondents saying so, while 26% of respondents cite the federal tier. This may be explained by the fact that respondents know more about the governments closest to them. However, the (Federal) administration's approach to fighting corruption is assessed as "fair" by majority (63%) of respondents, when 16% of respondents respectively rate it as "Inadequate" and "Poor." Only one respondent assessed the approach as "Adequate." This leaves room for improved initiatives in the fight against corruption.

As to what should be the fate of corrupt officials/citizens, majority (11 or 58% of respondents) indicated a combination of Punishment/Sanctions, Seizure/Forfeiture, and Loss of (official) position. Only one respondent feels that government/public officials should enjoy immunity from prosecution from allegations of corruption.

Respondents were further asked to rate the performance of five anti-corruption agencies in the country. Their responses are presented in table 7.1.

While dates of establishment, functions, structure, nature of funding, and problems may differ from one organization to another, and may

Table 7.1 Rating of the Performance of Anti-corruption Agencies

Rating	Agency				
	ICPC	EFCC	Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB)	Public Complaints Commission (PCC)	Due Process
Above Average		4		1	2
Average	8	10	7	8	7
Below Average	9	4	9	9	8
Total Respondents	17/19	18/19	15/19	18/19	15/19

Source: Fieldwork, April–May, 2007.

constitute factors in the assessments of anti-corruption agencies, most respondents were reasonably aware (at least of the existence) of these agencies and proceeded to rate them accordingly. Results can be categorized as “Good” for the EFCC, PCC, and the Due Process, and “Fair” for the ICPC and CCB. The onus lies with these organizations to re-examine their roles and improve on ways to be more effective in performing their functions. The EFCC, for instance, seems quite popular and was able to garner “above average” and “average” ratings from 4 and 10 respondents respectively. However, in its own case, some of the reasons given for below average rating included “double standards” and “some are untouchable.” The ICPC is cited as being “inactive” and having “No free hand to operate.” One respondent was unaware of the existence of the CCB, PCC, and Due Process Office, while the PCC is said to be “non-functional” by another 2 respondents. For the CCB that was said to be “non-existent” by 2 respondents, open, rather than confidential accountability, the CCB style is a new way by which it can curb power.

Majority of respondents (14 of 17–83%) opine that civil society and non-governmental organizations have roles to play in the fight against corruption. Indeed, their involvement is central to the successful exercise of over-sight functions, representing a homegrown strategy that demonstrates ownership and improves changes that lead to sustainability (Kpundeh, 2004: 130). However, 7 (50%) respondents think they have been inactive, 6 (35.2%) say they have been fairly active, and only 4 (23.5%) say civil society and non-governmental organizations have been playing their roles in the fight against corruption. Similar question was asked for the media, which can play a major role if it has strong investigative, reporting, and advocacy for good governance skills. While 16 of 17 (94.11%) respondents believe that the media have a role to play in the fight against corruption mainly by exposing it, just

one person said they do not. Their performance in carrying out this role is adjudged by 7 (50%) respondents respectively as “Active” and “Fair.” Only 3 of 17 (17.6%) persons who responded thought the media has been inactive in playing its roles in the fight against corruption.

Majority of respondents (13 of 17—76.4%) believe that corruption has negative effect on democratic development, and proceed to make some suggestions to curb it. Some of these are incorporated in the section on suggestions for curbing corruption in Nigeria.

Current Efforts

Of course, some commendable steps were undertaken, particularly when viewed against the fact that in the nation’s history, there has not been such hype about fighting the scourge of corruption. Some higher officials have been investigated and prosecuted accordingly, especially by the very vocal EFCC, while some other public officers were dismissed from office. For instance, the former Labour and Productivity minister and six others were arrested and detained in a \$214 million National Identity Card project scam (*The Punch*, 9 December 2003: 1, 2, and 7)²⁹ and a female INEC National Commissioner was dismissed over corruption-related charges. Similarly, in what has been described as the “bribe-for-big-budget” scandal, Adolphus Wabara, former Senate president, who was accused of taking more than \$400, 000 from the then minister for Education, Fabian Osuji, had to resign (and the minister was dismissed from service). Similarly, former Housing minister—Mrs. Alice Ojomo—had to go in April 2005 for allocating more than 200 houses to senior government officials through unprocedural means. Anti-corruption agencies such as the EFCC also confiscated properties worth millions of naira from an erstwhile IGP, while according to the then senior special assistant to the president on Due Process, Oby Ezekwesili, by opening public contracts to competition, the federal government is believed to have saved \$1 billion (*The Punch*, May 26, 2004: 4). Such actions have led some observers to say that this campaign is not only underway; it is the most serious and effective of such efforts in decades.

Anti-corruption Agencies: ICPC

Since the inception of civilian rule in 1999, the federal government, especially under the Obasanjo administration, has demonstrated some

commitment to the fight against corruption that has yielded some positive results. Several laws and institutions of anti-corruption in Nigeria have been put in place and/or strengthened. They include Reform in the Police, Code of Conduct Bureau, Offices of the Auditor-General and Accountant-General of the Federation, the Judiciary as well as the establishment of the Due Process Office.

Part of the steps taken to eradicate corrupt practices was the establishment in 2000 of the ICPC. It was set up and empowered by the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000, with the mission to rid Nigeria of all forms of corrupt practices and other related offences.³⁰ The establishment of the Commission came on the heels of the stigmatization of the country by the international community as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. It is instructive that the ICPC has made impact in the public sector in Nigeria since its establishment. In its enforcement activities, the ICPC between the years 2000 and 2005 received a total of 1,846 petitions (ICPC, *Progress Report*, September 2000–2005). Table 7.2 further reveals the activities of the ICPC.

While there are more incidences of corruption than those officially reported and documented, however, table 7.2 indicates that some investigations, prosecutions and sanctioning of public sector corruption were carried out under the Obasanjo civilian administration. In terms of prosecution, from May 2001 to July 2005, the ICPC filed a total of 49 cases in court involving 104 individuals including senators,

Table 7.2 Summary of Petitions Referred for Investigation, October 2000–September 2005

	<i>No. of Petitions Fully Investigated</i>	<i>No. of Petitions under Investigation</i>	<i>No. of Petitions Rejected for Lack of Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Total No. of Petitions Referred</i>
October 2000– September 2001	11	9	–	20
October 2001– September 2002	19	139	27	185
October 2002– September 2003	17	335	87	439
October 2003– September 2004	16	292	19	327
October 2004– September 2005	17	187	5	209

Source: Progress Report (September 2000–2005), ICPC, Abuja.

ministers, judges, senior advocates, top executives of parastatals, chief medical directors, local government chairmen, and so on (ICPC, *Progress Report*, September 2000–2005).

It is interesting that the ICPC's attempt to investigate allegations in respect of a petition filed by a senator of the Federal Republic, Arthur Nzeribe, against the then Senate president Pius Anyim and other senators resulted in the hurried set up of an ad hoc committee of the Senate, to exercise over-sight functions by in turn investigating the activities of the ICPC. Further, both the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Senate president obtained court injunctions to prevent the Commission from continuing its investigations (*Vanguard*, 5 February 2003: 35) on them. While the ICPC agreeably saw this move as an attempt to stultify investigation into the case and prevent it from performing its statutory duties, the executive director of Transparency International—Jeremy Pope—said the attempt by lawmakers to investigate the ICPC (at this time), “will be construed as bare-faced abuse of legislative powers to protect legislators from being held accountable.”³¹

This attempt culminated in an amendment, if not total repeal of the ICPC bill and the promulgation of another one in 2003, which many believed was illegally passed (*The Punch*, 16 June 2003: 66–67, 69). *The Guardian* editorial (6 March 2003: 18) titled “Senate and the ICPC Act” expressed the view that even though the Senate may claim to have merely amended it, the changes made to the ICPC Act were so fundamental as to amount to a repeal. In short, it concluded that the move was self-serving and protective of the lawmakers and would weaken instead of strengthening the fight against corruption.

Anti-corruption Agencies: The EFCC

The Federal Government also set up the EFCC in 2004 to, among others, investigate all financial crimes including advance fee fraud, money laundering, counterfeiting, illegal charge transfers, fraudulent encashment of negotiable instruments, computer credit card fraud, contract scam, and so on.³² The Commission is equally empowered to coordinate and enforce all economic and financial crimes, laws, and enforcement functions conferred on any other person or authority.

Among others, the EFCC was instrumental to Nigeria's removal³³ from the blacklist of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the world

body that monitors nations' compliance with global anti-money laundering regime and assist countries to put in place anti-money laundering law.³⁴ The EFCC also established a new anti-money laundering electronic reporting system that enables financial institutions report suspicious financial transactions and money laundering activities of customers to appropriate law enforcement agencies.³⁵

The EFCC received a total 8,610 petitions and recorded more than 2,000 arrests as on 16 October 2006 (*Zero Tolerance*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2006: 7). In addition, approximately 2,103 cases were under investigation and 306 prosecutions respectively. Over 100 convictions (including of a traditional ruler)³⁶ were secured while the value of assets and cash recovered was estimated at \$5 billion.³⁷

In October 2006, the head of the EFCC hinted that investigation of alleged financial crimes were underway for thirty-one of the country's thirty-six state governors.³⁸ After remarkable success fighting sundry economic and financial crimes, the EFCC set its eyes on the political space, leading to its profiling of corrupt politicians and recommending their disqualification to run for public office. As much as this is a good deterrent in the fight against corruption, some observers, as some of our respondents, noted that the fight has been selective,³⁹ as corruption charges are used to intimidate and hoodwink critics and political opponents.⁴⁰

The most related and controversial political corruption scandal handled by the EFCC centered on former vice president (VP) Atiku Abubakar,⁴¹ who was temporarily suspended from the PDP over alleged corruption charges in late 2006 and was thus unable to participate in the party's presidential primaries toward the 2007 elections. To actualize his presidential ambition, he cross-carpetted to the Action Congress (AC), causing the PDP to seek his removal from office as VP. In December 2006, the court ruled that he was immune from prosecution for corruption charges while in office. In February 2007, a Federal Court of Appeal in Abuja confirmed Abubakar's constitutional right to remain VP regardless of his change in party affiliation. The next step was that the VP's name appeared in the EFCC list of corrupt candidates, and INEC subsequently excluded him from the presidential ballot. In early March 2007, however, a Federal High Court ruled that INEC lacked the authority to disqualify candidates unless so ordered by a court of law. On 3 April, an (higher) Appeal Court ruled that the disqualification of candidates was in fact within INEC's jurisdiction. Hours later, the Federal High Court in Abuja contradicted that ruling, determining that INEC lacked the authority to exclude Abubakar from

the election and ordering that the electoral commission place his name on the ballot. Abubakar proceeded to take the case to the Supreme Court that was expected to consider the matter during the week of 9 April 2007. However, on 11 April, President Obasanjo declared 12 and 13 April public holidays to allow voters prepare for the 14 April elections, effectively postponing any ruling by the Supreme Court until the week of the presidential elections. Though Abubakar's name ended up on the ballot, the damage to his candidacy had been done already. The popular perception was that Obasanjo used the EFCC against the former vice president for political reasons.

Based on this and others, the nation's anti-corruption program remains weak in several respects. Among others, the Fiscal Responsibility (that could hold public officers accountable) and Freedom of Information (that could compel release of public information) bills have not yet been passed, while constitutional autonomy is not yet guaranteed for agencies such as the ICPC and EFCC.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Curbing Corruption in Nigeria

The negative impact of corruption on institutions, growth and productivity, policy processes, property rights, and consequently development often translate into political instability, frequent regime/administrative changes, unstable policies and economic investment environment that in turn slow the consolidation of participatory governance. Therefore, controlling corruption remains a great challenge for the consolidation of democracy. It is obvious that democratic sustainability will be difficult for Nigeria to attain unless corruption is squarely addressed and significantly reduced.

Whatever measures are put in place in the short and long terms, it is clear that the country and its citizens deserve a real and sustained campaign to stem corruption beyond what may be considered occasional stunts that advertise the nation as beholden to a reformist agenda or seduce the Nigerian public into a false sense of confidence in the seriousness of the crusade against corruption. Among others, suggestions such as addressing good governance by attending to efficiency of public services, seeing through and sanctioning corrupt acts, and sustaining the fight against corruption are put forward to bring down the country's corruption ranking and improve the nation's democratic rating among other nations of the world.

The point that should be recognized is that the magnitude of the efforts made by the Obasanjo administration can be assessed only by the pervasive extent of the problem itself, and the fact that prior to now, there had not been such serious efforts. Moreover, the war on corruption has improved the image of Nigeria, even if marginally. The establishment of an agency such as the EFCC and its courageous fight is quite commendable, which needs to be strengthened and sustained. To this extent, such agencies need to be nursed and nurtured as viable sanitising endeavors. Their capacities should be built progressively as effective dragnets against corruption. Ways by which such enhanced agencies will survive (various administrations and/or personalities who head them) as national watchdogs also need to be mapped out. However, a single or few agencies or instruments of anti-corruption will not do. Effective and durable corruption control requires reinforcement and overlapping institutions of accountability.⁴² In addition, strong political will (i.e., translating policy pronouncements and rhetoric into sustainable actions) at all levels of government is pivotal to confronting corruption. Hence, both government and citizens need to do more in order to sustain democracy.

It is acknowledged that a few culprits have been identified and dealt with. However, these and other episodes are too infinitesimal, and too far apart compared to the rate of recurrence of corruption-related incidents to constitute a basis for high rating or applause for the Nigerian state in the fight to curb the scourge of corruption. Indeed, in spite of unbridled corruption in the executive arm of government, few ministers have been removed or prosecuted for corruption both by the Obasanjo and Yar'adua administrations.⁴³

Policy Recommendations

The following anti-corruption measures are quite apt in combating the scourge in Nigeria as TI⁴⁴ alluded to.

1. Ensure that government officials and public servants are well paid⁴⁵ in order to reduce the appeal to solicit for bribes and also make what will be lost if convicted (for corruption) high enough to deter corrupt activities.
2. Adoption and strict enforcement of anti-corruption laws. What is undesirable, is unfair and uneven application of anti-corruption laws that will only lead to loss of legitimacy and cease to have any deterrent effect.

3. There is need for performance monitoring as well as periodic auditing of (elected and appointed) officials through passing of the fiscal responsibility bill and empowerment of Code of Conduct Bureau and the Code of Conduct Tribunal. The process of declaration of assets also needs to be taken more seriously and made public, beginning from the stage of seeking election (as contestant) or public service appointment and should be monitored till a person leaves office. It should, therefore, include provisions for the disclosure of assets owned by contestants and their dependants during the filing of nomination papers, as well as those for the declaration of any dues to banks and public financial institutions, government, and so on that have not been paid.⁴⁶ This way, anticipatory declarations will be minimized.
4. There is need for increased resources, highly trained, qualified, well remunerated, protected and insured staff for anti-corruption agencies and whistleblowers.
5. There is also need for political will (including anti-corruption agencies' insulation from vulnerability to regime changes, direct reporting to [a strong] Parliament, prosecutorial and sanctioning authority) for anti-corruption efforts.
6. An independent, efficient judiciary is a precursor to a reduction in corruption. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the ICPC had, for instance, in 2003 decried courts' delay in prosecuting fraud cases (*The Guardian*, 3 December 2003:1).
7. Passing of Freedom of Information Law that will give citizens access to most government documents, budgets, revenue, and expenditure and allows citizens to (publicly) question public officials, is imperative for corruption control.
8. Enforcement: reward and punishment is critical. In particular, punishment of (many more) offenders, in other words, scapegoatism (Okoosi-Simbine, 1993) remains an important method of discouraging potential offenders.⁴⁷ Situations where identities of offenders are protected and percentages (at times minimal) of stolen public funds are the only forms of punishment are insufficient to deter corrupt acts. Further, when sanctions are pronounced, they need to be implemented. Official corruption is attractive and widespread in Nigeria because the possibility of being caught or punished is remote. No risk, no deterrent. It is true that people may turn from negative political and social actions only when the costs of those forms of activity become too high. Also, the general principle that regimes under which a public official serves

or subsequent regimes might hold the person responsible, and punish them for past actions, must be entrenched in the political culture (Ibrahim, 2001: 85, 2003: 9).

9. Total reform of the political, economic, social, and value orientation of the society and specific mobilization against corruption. This should be carried out by the National Orientation Agency (NOA), political parties, civil society organizations, and the media. Awareness raising and public education will among others put an end to a culture of silence and the dismantling of pre-establishment devices and cover-ups that make discovery difficult, if not impossible. Similarly, moral re-orientation, especially for a lot of youths who commonly engage in exam malpractices (and after “passing” such exams only desire to travel out of the country if they cannot work in banks and oil companies) is of urgent necessity and importance to safeguard whatever is left of the future of Nigeria.
10. Governance capacity in all its ramifications needs to be improved in Nigeria. Generally, there are no standards because institutions are feeble and failing, making it difficult to hold public officers to any minimum level of performance, conduct, or accountability. This is patently exhibited in public accounts at all levels, which are not being properly, transparently, and regularly audited. Nigeria is still a nation of “anything goes” because laws are not properly applied.
11. Commitment to institution building across all sectors (judicial, legislative, executive, private, civil society (a strong one with access to information and a mandate to oversee the state) and the media.
12. Preventive measures need to be put in place through clear procedures, a simple accounting and an effective supervisory system.
13. An effective tax regime that will put more money in government coffers and encourage better service delivery need to be put in place. Currently, it is mostly only formal sector workers who pay tax and this is even because it is deducted from source, while fake tax clearance certificates are very easy to come by.
14. There is need to ratify, domesticate, and implement existing international and regional anti-corruption conventions⁴⁸ in order to establish international norms. In addition, Nigeria's anti-corruption agencies should work closely with sub-regional, regional, and international anti-corruption bodies in order to strengthen the fight against corruption in the country.

Notes

1. "Strong Convictions; Nigeria's First Anti-corruption Czar," *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 February 2007; Nigeria loses 4.8 trillion to corruption in forty years, says EFCC. (*The Guardian*, 12 December 2006: 7).
2. U.S. State Department, "Nigeria," Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, quoted in Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report, Nigeria: Current Issues, 2007: 10.
3. ICG (2006).
4. Regarding close family, personal, private, and clique gains.
5. Regarding influence.
6. Such as those caused by or arising from serious political disagreements between members of the same political party.
7. Which normally takes a long period that at the time it eventually does come out, the new one has already expired (!), whereas for a few extra naira, by the backdoor, one can be renewed and obtained in less than two weeks.
8. Where policy issues are debated and laws made on the basis of "seeing and settling" concerned committee or vocal members of the State or Federal Houses of Assembly.
9. Where cases are heard and adjourned at the whim and caprice of the highest bidder.
10. As was the case between the three Global System of Mobile (GSM) Communication networks-MTN, ECONET and (GLOBACOM) at the initial period of license granting.
11. As in the payment or non-payment of electricity bills, See Okoosi-Simbine (2001: 105–121) and Kyari Tijani (2005), "The Dynamics of Corruption," *The Guardian*, 3 April 3: 13.
12. *Zero Tolerance*, Magazine of the EFCC, Vol. 1, No. 3, January 2006: 11.
13. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/political_corruption.
14. *Zero Tolerance*, Magazine of the EFCC, Vol. 1, No. 3, January 2006: 17.
15. See Obasanjo (1999) Inaugural Speech. The president's inaugural speech did not contain any new approach to fighting the monster of corruption; bereft of any effective anti-graft strategy. It contained platitudes, suasion, preachment, and undue reliance on the Anti-graft Act.
16. CRS (2007: 11).
17. "Blood and Oil," *The Economist*, 15 March 2007.
18. Governor Alamieyeseigha of Bayelsa State is believed by the EFCC to have looted close to N50 billion, See *Zero Tolerance*, Vol. 1, No. 3, January 2006: 13.
19. Ibid.
20. "The Three Peas in a Pod," *ibid.*, p. 16.
21. Quoted in *Thisday*, 8 April, 2002: 1 and 10.
22. *The Punch*, 14 November, 2003: 1–2.
23. The Abacha era corruption incidences were particularly worrisome in terms of magnitude, depth, coverage, and extent and these have been widely reported (See, for instance, *Thisday*, 26 September 1999: 1; *The Guardian*, 5 December 1999: 13–15; "Gavel to Gavel" in *Thisday*, 22 April 2000: 14 and 15; and T. Masland and J. Bartholet. 2000. "The Lost Billions," *Newsweek*, 13 March.
24. EU Election Observation Final Report, Nigeria, 2007: 2, quoted in CRS (2007).
25. Ostensibly in place to check for arms and smuggled goods, their actual function is to extort payments from travelers by uncovering various minor violations (Mundt and Aborisade, 2001: 698).
26. See *Zero Tolerance*, Vol. 1, No. 3, January 2007: 7.
27. Some of these include the killings of the attorney general and minister of justice—Chief Bola Ige in Oyo state, lawyer and Mrs. Igwe in Awka, Anambra state, Chief Marshall

Harry of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) in Rivers state, Chief Aminasori Dikibo of the PDP in Delta State, frontline politician and member of the opposition All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Lawyer Lanipekun in Ibadan, Oyo state, and a host of others.

28. Beholden to the Holy Spirit.
29. This is a project that has been on for long and on which billions of naira have been appropriated over the years and many Nigerians were hoping would eventually see the light of day under this administration. The National Identity Card scam involved three ministers—Internal Affairs (Late Sunday Afolabi and Mohammed Shatta) and Labour (Hussein Akwanga), said to have accepted bribe of more than \$1 million to award a \$214 million contract to SAGEM—a French electronics company.
30. See FRN (2000).
31. <http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/news/article3>, Wednesday, 27 November 2002.
32. See EFCC (Establishment) Act, 2004, Abuja, EFCC.
33. This followed the 2001 challenge by the FATF when it listed Nigeria among Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories (NCCTs) in the global war against corruption.
34. See Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2004, Abuja, EFCC.
35. *EFCC Alert!*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 20 November 2006: 15.
36. Igwe, Godwin Madu of Achi Kingdom, Oji River Local Government Area of Enugu State was convicted of duping a foreigner of \$807, 000, *EFCC Alert!*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 20 November 2006: 6.
37. For corruption, money laundering, advance fee fraud, pipeline vandalism and terrorism, some of them involving top government functionaries, *Zero Tolerance*, Vol. 1, No. 3, January 2006: 18. The *Christian Science Monitor*, “Strong Convictions; Nigeria’s First Anti-corruption Czar” (8 February 2007) puts investigations related to e-mail scams by the EFCC at over 2,000 and over 130 convictions for fraud.
38. CRS (2007: 7); Alex Mabayoje, “Closing In on Corrupt Governors,” *Newswatch*, 9 October 2006.
39. For instance, an unfinished anti-graft inquiry that stands out like a sore thumb is that of Julius Makanjuola, former permanent secretary in the Ministry of Defence, said to be the president’s cousin and some other persons who were arraigned in 2002 before Justice Sidi Bage at the Abuja High Court, to face fraud charges involving N450 million. Suddenly, the then chief justice of the Federation, Kanu Agabi, entered a *nolle prosequi*, indicating the government had decided, for unknown reasons, to withdraw from the case. Later, probably due to criticism, though explained as the fact that the accused persons were about getting away with the line of prosecution being pursued by the government, Makanjuola was later dismissed in 2004, and ordered to be tried by the ICPC (*The Punch*, 6 February 2004: 3).
40. “Strong Convictions: Nigeria’s First Anti-corruption Czar,” *Christian Science*
41. *Monitor*, 8 February 2007. *Zero Tolerance*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2006: 14–15 and 20.
42. Kpundeh (2004: 126).
43. See “Ige, Igwes: NBA’s demand for fiats appropriate,” *The Punch*, 25 August, 2003: 61.
44. See TI Corruption Perception Report, 2007.
45. Nigeria is one of African countries identified as not paying a living wage, Kpundeh (2004: 126).
46. See Kumar (2002: 3491), “Reforming Indian Electoral Process,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, 24 August.
47. Public officers should either loose their office, forfeit illegally acquired wealth and/or even be jailed.
48. Such as the regional convention of the African Union (AU), United Nations Convention against Corruption and the OECD Anti-bribery Convention.

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