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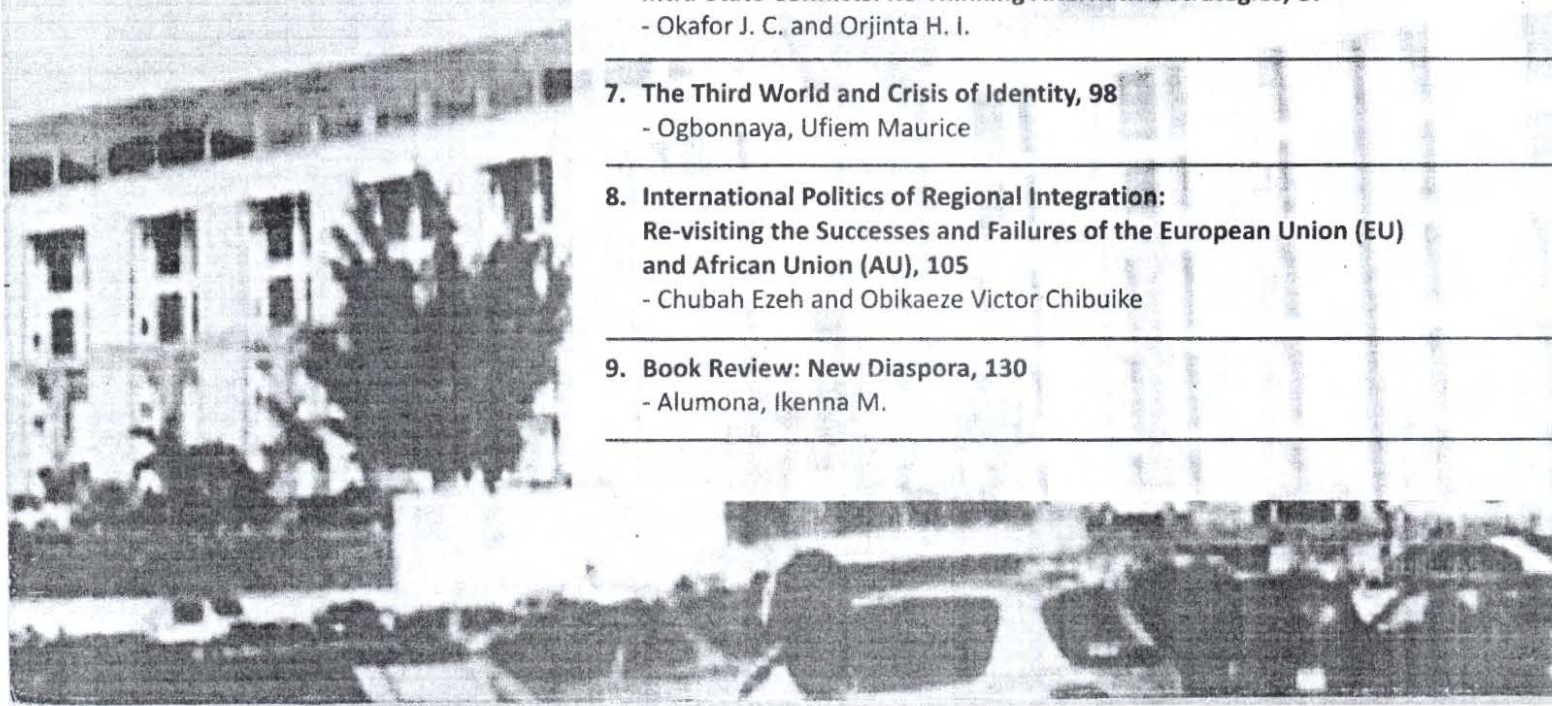
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The Politics and Sociology of Corruption in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Abstract

Rhetorics and promises by politicians in the campaign trail are often not delivered to the people as a result of their interest in carting away public funds for, thereby rendering their followers pauperized. Good governance is ensured in a corruption-free environment. This paper appraises the on-going campaign against corruption in Nigeria, especially during the Fourth Republic. The paper argues that corruption is one of the worst problems, hindering Nigeria's progress in socio-economic growth and development. Some non-governmental organizations and civil society/liberty associations have been promoting anticorruption crusades but there is need for wider publicity on the cancerous monster ravaging the nation. The fight against corruption in Nigeria requires thorough access to useful information for the masses. The paper pointed out that curbing corruption has to do with full awareness of its devastating effects and how the political elites as well as leaders in power are playing with peoples' well being. In the light of this, the paper recommends a national rebirth/reorientation on anticorruption in Nigeria. Enthroning a value system that rejects corruption in all levels of society will add to the fight against corruption. In addition, government should empower the masses through provision of infrastructure and amenities needed for entrepreneurial skills/vocational acquisition to flourish and thereby reduce the extent of poverty in the country.

Keywords: *Corruption; Anti-corruption Crusade; Fourth Republic, Non-Governmental Organization, Political Elite.*

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group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is inconsistent with the established legal norms and prevailing moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for the material and spiritual well being of all manners of society in a just and equitable manner (2002:23).

Corruption from this perspective is seen as "outright theft, embezzlement of funds or other misappropriation of state property, nepotism and the granting of favour to personal acquaintances and the abuse of the public authority to exact payments and privileges" (Desta,2006:19). Viewed from this angle, the general public is seen as the principal victim and the public officials as the agent.

According to Dike (2003) corruption in Nigeria occurs in so many different forms. Political corruption which takes place at the highest levels of political authority, affects the manner in which decisions are made. Electoral corruption is the buying of votes, special favours to anointed candidates or promises of illegitimate votes to certain candidates. Another type is bureaucratic corruption which takes place among public servants. This type of corruption is what the citizen's experience in ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) including schools, hospitals and

police stations (Ovienloba 2007). For Olarinmoye (2008) electoral corruption finds an intimate link between electoral process and poor governance. When electoral process are subverted, it leads to the installation of individuals who pursue their private interest rather than the general interest hence this will eventually lead to bad governance, poverty and economic underdevelopment that have plagued Nigeria (Olarinmoye 2008). One aspect of corruption that has contributed to Nigeria's underdevelopment is bureaucratic corruption which does not allow for effective management of resources by the government that could improve the well being of the citizens making it an obstacle to good governance in Nigeria (Lawal and Tobi 2006). Agba (2010) has examined the different types of corruption and concluded that bureaucratic and political corruption weaken good governance. This is so because policy makers become hesitant in taking decisions to reduce corruption or introduce new reforms to combat it.

Corruption has remained one of the most complex problems that have impeded development in Nigeria. Corruption is one of the issues ravaging the foundation of the nation. Ribadu (2006) also stated that corruption is one of the most dangerous social ills of any society because corruption, like a deadly virus, attacks the vital structure that makes society to progress, thus putting its very existence into serious perils Preventing corruption in Nigeria has been very difficult, based on the dimension it has taken particularly lack of political leadership. A situation where looters of nation's wealth go without charge, awarded contracts that were never executed and yet given recognition in the

Therefore, preventing abuse and reducing corruption is important to increase for social and economic wellbeing of the society.

Despite the enormous income from oil in the last four decades, 54.4% of Nigerians are still poor (NBS, 2008). Many sources have reported that the percentage of the population living below or at purchasing power parity of \$1.25 a day is 64.4% (UNDP African Human Development Report, 2012). Access to quality and affordable health services and other basic amenities including safe drinking water and improved sanitation facilities is limited and economic opportunities remain poor for many citizens. With children under 15 years of age accounting for about 45 percent of the country's population (FGN 2004), the burden of health sector has become overwhelming.

Comparatively, there has been an increase in the budget over the last two-decades 1990 – 2010 accounting for N362,19.60 and N2,961850.00 (CBN, 2010). The challenges facing poor masses, in spite of this increased budget, have remained enormous. The output in terms of service provision at all the three tiers of government has been very discouraging. The gladiators constantly manipulated the people and the political processes to advance their own selfish agenda, while the society remained pauperized and the masses in a supposedly blessed country wallowed in abject poverty

This is a threat to growth and development for the country. According to African Human Development Report (2012), Nigeria has been found to be among the very few countries that have the highest percentage (27%) of

corruption victims who faced a bribe situation in 2008. It impacts negatively on individual or group behaviour leading to vices such as bribery, nepotism, and misappropriation of funds which have become the order of the day. According to Ike (2009), corruption is probably the fastest means to accumulate quick wealth in Nigeria. Hence, it has placed a great need for a critical appraisal of corrupt practices in relation to sociological issues of society pressures during the fourth republic.

Measures of combating this malaise of corruption and the challenges it poses, requires an understanding of its causes. Many factors contribute to the spread of corruption in Nigeria. For instance Dininio and Kpundeh (1999), Dike (2003), and Obayelu (2007), has traced the root causes of corruption in Nigeria to; poor payment system in the country, tepid attitudes of officials who are charged with enforcing the laws lead to corrupt behaviours. Obayelu (2007) has specifically identified a number of factors propagating corrupt practices in Nigeria. They include lack of clear rules and code of ethics that leads to the abuse of political power; hence most Nigerians are exposed to corrupt practices. Furthermore low salaries and unfavourable working conditions with poor incentives for effective performance are strong indicators for corruption (Obayelu, 2007). Due to the fact that workers in Nigeria both in the private and public sectors are poorly paid and sometimes they are not paid regularly, it gives an opportunity for corrupt practices especially bureaucratic corruption. This is because when workers are not paid they will devise alternatives means to meet their family obligations

state apparatus is used to build up the layer of the primordial public, thus making corruption the hallmark of the civic public (Osaghae 1988).

A good citizen of the primordial public is one who gives out and asks for nothing in return and will only continue to be a good man if he channels part of the largesse from the civic public to the primordial public. That is the logic of the dialectics which makes it legitimate to rob the civic public in order to strengthen the primordial public. The acme of this dialectics is corruption which takes two dimensions - the embezzlement of public fund from the civic public and the solicitation and acceptance of bribes from individuals seeking services provided by the civic public by those who administer these services (Ekeh 1975).

Richard Joseph in another study linked corruption to the fall of the Nigerian Second Republic (Joseph). This as a result of prebendalism in which state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by office holders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups. For Seteolu (2005) while clientelism and prebendalism might be mutually reinforcing, the two concepts have separate meanings. Clientelism defines the nature of individual and group relationships within the broader social and political space, prebendalism are essentially a function of the competition for, and appropriation of the offices of the state. According to Seteolu (2005) clientelism assists to understand the mechanism of (how) class control legitimizes the lopsided distribution of resources among social groups and enhances the status of the political elite.

The soft state thesis propounded by Gurnl Myrdal also helps us to understand why corruption persists in a country like Nigeria. This theory gives us a better understanding of a post-colonial state and its predicament largely drawn from the Asian experience but applicable to the rest of third world including Nigeria. A soft state whether democratic or undemocratic is bedeviled with the inability to institute reforms or enforce social discipline. It is a state where the legal system and its paraphernalia are moribund or at least ineffective. Even when framing policies, the authorities (under the control of politico-bureaucratic elite) are reluctant to place obligations on the people, especially in matters of corruption (Myrdal 1968). Gulthorpe (1975) further explains that a soft state is one in which formal rules (laws, officially stated administrative rules and practices, etc) are applied copiously and in a lax manner rather than vigorously and consistently. It is a state in which private advantage can be gained and private bargains struck concerning the enforcement or non enforcement of the rules, as when a businessman bribes a tax official. Apart from money inducement, corruption is generated through kinship sentiment and nepotism. Therefore, one of the damaging consequences of the politics of identity is that it tends to render the state soft. Laws are discriminately applied and the anti-corruption laws are not an exception. Therefore, one of the characters of a soft state is its over-permissiveness of corruption and corrupt acts. This explains the non-workability of government anti-corruption agencies instituted by the Obasanjo administration such as the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), the

colonials. However, the group became increasingly prosperous and more of a bourgeoisie after the colonialists were dislodged from power in the former colonial states, including Nigeria.

The bourgeois class in Nigeria was a loose coalition of the elites of the disparate ethnic and religious groups and economic interests. In the struggle against the colonial regime, this class united under common grievances even though it was fragmented along the fault lines of Nigeria's incoherent economy and its multi-ethnic and religious makeup.

The self-rule struggle spearheaded by this class against colonial system was not motivated altruistically to change or reform the system to function in the interest of the masses but merely to inherit the system for their selfish interests. This objective became obvious and manifest for most of the decades after independence as exemplified in the oppressive character of the post-colonial state which made it anti-democratic for most of the post-independent period. Even under the so-called democratic dispensation that followed the third wave of global democratic phenomenon, the transition for this dominant ruling class in Nigeria to be driven by the interests of the collectives in their actions and policies is yet to occur.

Though democratic in name, the nature of post-1999 democracy in Nigeria has continued to manifest anti-democratic tendencies which we shall be discussing in details in the next section. The reason for these goes back to the structure of economy and politics instituted and nurtured by colonialism. According to Ake (2002), the logic of colonialism did not allow the Nigerian political class to be anything more than marginal

economically. Because of this weakness, the only instrument available for this class to ascend to power was politics and mass mobilization. With the acquisition of political power, this class used the state to expand their economic base. This was done through expansion of the state soon after independence using the ideology of economic development that supports the state direct participation in the economy through the establishment of state-owned industries and state run enterprises, thus expanding the role of the state in the lives of the people (Ake 1996).

This, of course, has shaped the dynamics of politics in Nigeria and made it a zero-sum game in the sense that advancement in economics is synonymous with advancement in politics. The implication of this is the high value placed on political power in Nigeria which has created an obsessive preoccupation with politics since that is the only avenue for economic accumulation. Access to political power implies that the lucky elements would be in charge of the numerous government owned industries and enterprises of which they can lay their hands into the till without being accountable to the general public.

Ake (1996) argues that this tendency of the Nigerian system undermines the society. The use of political power for accumulation of wealth makes Nigerian capitalism unproductive. This is because the wealthiest people in Nigeria are generally people who have acquired wealth through state power either by political corruption, access to state contracts, agency rates or concessions such as import licenses that hardly involve them in direct productive activity.

from the struggle within the Nigerian ruling elites that such tightening of hold would guarantee survival for the dominant faction of the ruling class controlling the centre. For instance, the civil war was as a result of the rivalry and fear of domination between the country's major ethnic groups. The coup led by Kaduna Nzeogwu was interpreted by the North as a ploy by the Igbo to dominate the country given the fact that prominent northern politicians and military officers lost their lives in the process. The counter coup of July 1966 led by northern officers, spurred chains of events including the mass killing of the Igbo and easterners residing in the north and the declaration of Biafran republic (Ojeifa 2004).

The war that followed was an attempt by the Northern dominated federal government to reunite the east with the rest of the country. To co-opt the minorities of the Niger Delta where oil economy is bourgeoning to the federal side, the Gowon military administration created states for them, thus satisfying a long dream that had its root in the colonial era but systematically removed the control of the oil from them under the guise that enough resources is needed at the federal level to prosecute the war. In other words, it is the effective manipulation and abuse of the structure and processes of state power to accumulate oil surplus and institutionalize factional rule that brought monopolistic tendencies that are attended by authoritarianism, corruption and patrimonialism which of course breeds instability and politics of exclusion (Obi, 2002).

The texture of this argument is to drive the point that the federal dominance has proven unfair, exploitative and subversive of the spirit of federalism which Nigeria professes, bringing about a situation where political power is

concentrated in a tier of government that also controls the collection and distribution of all oil resources making other tiers dependent and marginalized from oil power. The conflict in the Niger Delta is therefore an attempt to redress this character of the Nigerian state which goes back to the colonial era that foisted a political-economic structure sustained for the benefit of the profiteering alliance of ruling elites and the oil majors (Adebanwi 2001). The transition of the country from colonialism to a post-colonial state was a mere symbolism of flag independence as it has remained an unfinished project in terms of real power metrics, which became glaring in the foreign control of oil since the inception of the Nigerian petroleum industry and the dominance of Nigeria's political economy (Obi, 2002).

The global economic crisis of the 1980s was very significant in creating the condition for the new form of ethno-nationalism that arose in the 1990s in Nigeria. The resultant decline in oil revenue and mismanagement of resources by unaccountable military elites plunged the country into an economic crisis that left its trail of social consequences that partly contributed to this new form of ethno-nationalism manifesting in Nigeria (Duruji, 2010). The severity of the crisis compelled the government to implement an economic reform program premised on stabilization and adjustment, which was supervised by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This reform consisted of liberalization, privatization, deregulation, and the removal of subsidies, all of which were ideas aimed at scaling down the state's role in the economy. The effects of these policies were reflected in the collapse of local industries and decline in the capacity of the ones that survived including rising costs of business in vital energy and power sectors. The consequent shrinking of

The Sociology of Corruption in Nigeria

The sociological dimension of corruption in Nigeria is deeply rooted in Nigeria's political economy and the character of Nigeria state. It is a fact that Nigeria was a creation of colonialism to serve purely British economic interest without regard for the natives. The struggle for independence, initially premised on the plank of correcting the exploitation of Nigeria's resources by foreign interests became fractionalized along ethnic and other fault lines dividing the country. Consequently instead of a pan Nigerian struggle for independence, it became an ethno-regional struggle to replace the colonialists. The implication of this is that the faction of elites that acquires power comes in and pursues ethno-regional agenda that negates pan-Nigerian interests. Secondly, the rentier nature of the Nigeria state and the near zero industrial productivity base, make access to power in Nigeria vital as that is the most important means of accumulation. To retain power and the access to wealth, the power elite must dispense favour to retinues of supporters.

Given this scenario, corrupt practices in Nigeria had involved myriads of political elites/leaders in various levels of political offices who engage in corrupt activities to enrich themselves and their circle of friends and supporters. This is done through gross misappropriation of budgets meant for development purposes to benefit the general interests. this kind of corruption is what Ribadu (2006) says involves deliberate use of one's position to get illegitimate benefits and undue advantage which could be financial or in other forms.. Most of the time, this corrupt leaders embezzle the country's treasury with reckless abandon. This

looting of public funds are sometimes due largely to social pressures from relatives and kinsmen who believe that access to power by their close kin is an open invitation to squander the nation wealth while the tenure last. In the process, these leaders acquires outrageous amount they and their coming generation does not need. For instance, the former Head of State General. Sani Abacha siphoned \$2.3 billion from the government treasury, awarded contracts worth \$1billion to his personal companies, and took \$1 billion as bribe from foreign contractors (Edikan and Emem 2008) Likewise Professor Adenike Grange, a former Minister of Health (2007-2008) along with others, was arraigned in an Abuja court over financial impropriety involving the sum of 5.2 billion naira (\$34,666,666.67 US Dollars) (The Nation, 2009).

The prevailing attitude among Nigerians, sometimes make these corrupt practices inevitable. The Nigerian socio-economic landscape creates an environment that is unconducive for the upright and men of integrity to thrive. For instance ones a person assumes a public office, he discovers that his/her circle of friends has multiplied. Congratulatory messages from sundry quarters appear all in a bid to position themselves for patronages. Invitation for launchings and social events where the public official was hitherto a non-entity, now abound most of them identifying him as the most important personality for the occasion with expectation for him/her to dole at financial largesse, notwithstanding the source of such monies. This consequently renders ineffective, anticorruption measures adopted by the government sometimes under pressure from civil society groups and external interests. As

started out with serving former Head of State, the late Sani Abacha. When Abacha died he shifted his allegiance to former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar and then to President Olusegun Obasanjo, and played a major role in pushing the infamous third-term agenda, while he was governor of Delta State. After he finished his two-terms and lost his immunity from prosecution as prescribed by the Constitution, Ibori found another cover by installing his relative, Emmanuel Uduaghan, as governor of Delta State as well as aligning himself with the late President Umaru Yar'Adua, whose campaign he allegedly bankrolled.

As the tenure wore on, there were indications that Ibori was gearing up to become vice-president to Yar'Adua in his second term in office, to replace President Goodluck Jonathan, who was vice-president then. However, the death of Yar'Adua, before the end of his first tenure changed the political calculations, with Jonathan taking over at the helm of affairs. That singular change in government, many believe, resulted in the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) re-opening Ibori's case in 2010, forcing him to flee to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where he was eventually arrested and extradited to the UK (Agba 2012).

The first attempt by the EFCC to prosecute Ibori in 2007, while Yar'Adua was president, was unsuccessful and shortly after the then Chairman of EFCC, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, was not only removed from office, he was demoted and dismissed from the police. Ibori's corruption case was transferred to the Asaba High Court and a new judge appointed in the person of Marcel Awokulehin to handle the case, dismissed

all 170 counts against him without hearing any evidence at trial. But when there was change in government, Ibori preferred to be tried in the UK rather than in Nigeria, where he had earlier been declared not guilty (Ajaero 2012).

EFCC operators had pledged in a newspaper report to further prosecute Ibori when he returns to Nigeria, The sentencing of Ibori was based on the foundation of the case built by the EFCC in 2007 which unfortunately was thrown out by the Federal High Court in Asaba for lack of merit. The same fate has lately befallen other EFCC cases, notably the Erastus Akingbola, Ndudi Elumelu, Dimeji Bankole and Gbenga Daniel matters. They were all thrown out by the courts purely on technical grounds without consideration of the substantive issues (Chidozie 2012). The Commission stated that "The fact that a case which supposedly lacked merit in Nigeria could fetch a 13-year jail term in the UK after a landmark guilt plea, brings to the fore the need for a reassessment of the nation's justice delivery process. We must strengthen our judicial institutions if we are to make any headway in the anti-graft efforts." However, it is worthy of note that since inception, the EFCC has arraigned about 19 former governors on corruption charges, but none of them is currently serving prison term in Nigeria (Chidozie 2012).

But beside the ineffectiveness of EFCC and other anti-corruption agencies to effectively prosecute corruption cases and obtain conviction, is the attitude of Nigerians who quickly coalesce to protect these corrupt elements, a bully ruling class. The cases of Ibori, Alamesegha and Bode George indicate the same trend. When Alamesegha had issues of money

National Assembly since it was inaugurated in 1999 (Falade 2011). The first scandal over furniture allowance and award of bogus contracts led to the fall of Senator Chuba Okadigbo during the first term of Obasanjo. Senator Haruna Abubakar who was the deputy Senate President in 2000 was accused of embezzling of 16.9 million naira (\$140,833) of Christmas and Sallah gifts. Senator Adolphus Wabara who became the Senate president after the 2003 General election was also forced to resign after accusation were leveled against him for demanding gratification from ministries and agencies to uphold their budget proposals. The next principal officer of the National Assembly that was forced to step down on accusation of corruption related to inflation of contract terms was the first woman to become the speaker of House of Representatives, Mrs Patricia Eteh. The former speaker of the House of Representatives, in 2007 lost her seat due to award of contracts at inflated price of 628 million naira (\$ 233,333) in 2007 (Falade 2011), but was later exonerated by her colleagues.

The man that took over from Representative Patricia Eteh, Representative Dimeji Bankole was not free of this corruption bug in the National Assembly as he was in constant battles with a segment of the House that accused him of corrupt practices and also sent deluge of petitions that EFCC found credible and used against him. Dimeji Bankole was alleged to have over invoiced the bill for the purchase of vehicles for oversight functions at the rate of 2.4 billion naira.(Alabi and Fashagba,2010).

Even though he completed his tenure with the 6th Assembly, Bankole's

people rejected him at the polls during the 2011 General Elections and the EFCC arrested him and charged him to court for taking loans on behalf of the House of Representative that was not appropriated and awarding contracts for sundry items. The question that arises from the examples highlighted above, boils down to motives behind these corrupt tendencies. Certainly, sociological factors has been shown to exert pressure even upon the unwilling who eventually succumb to temptations of corruption so as to remain relevant and retain such highly exulted office. Professor Fabian Osuji an academician who was the former education minister between 2003-2005 was stunned at what he met at the National Assembly when he went to defend his education budget. He was asked by members of the education committee in collaboration with some principal officers including Former president of the Senate, Senator Adolphus Wabara to grease their hand before his ministries budget can be passed. As a neophyte he went back to his ministry and its parastatals to mobilize 55 million naira (\$458333) bribe money he offered Senator Adolphus Wabara and the House Committees on Education in 2005 (Falade, 2011. Lewis, 2011). This tendency of making demands was also exposed with the imbroglio between the House of Representatives and Chairman of Security Exchange Commission Miss Arunma Oteh.

The enormous pressure office holders face everyday once they ascend power, compels them to soil their hands just to maintain and oil their machine to retain power. Nigerian generally raise expectation of trickle down from office holders and given the number of people

democracy cannot be achieved without a confrontation of this behemoth of corruption in Nigeria.

However, the fact is that corruption has been long recognized both by the government, civil society and the populace as a hindrance to development in the country. All attempts to tackle corruption in Nigeria seem to be hitting the brick wall. The reason for this is not far fetched, it revolves around the values system in the country which seems to have made corruption the normal way of life in Nigeria.

The sense of entitlement in the country and the fratricidal division of the people along multiple fault lines tends to encourage corruption and give it fillip to endure. The character of Nigeria's political economy as well as massive poverty of the populace has kept reinforcing the fabrics that support corruption in Nigeria.

In the light of this, this paper recommends that the only way corruption can be tackled in the country is not only strengthening of the laws and the institutions that enforce them, but much more than that, a national rebirth that targets at reorientation of the entire Nigerian populace is imperative. This should be aimed at instituting a value system that rejects corruption and should have zero tolerance for such practices. To this regard designing an academic curriculum that incorporates corruption and its negative vices in school curricula should be part of the educational system from the basic level to the tertiary. In addition, government should empower the masses through provision of infrastructure and amenities needed for entrepreneurial skills to flourish and thereby reduces the extent of poverty in the country.

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