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AN X-RAY OF CORE ISSUES IN GOVERNANCE, CORRUPTION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Solomon Ifeanyichukwu Ifejika & Fatima O. Aliu
Department of Political Science,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
+2348032119176; solomonifejika@gmail.com

Abstract
This paper examines the effects of corruption on governance and development in the Nigeria. The paper finds that corruption remains the major obstacle to good governance and the bane of Nigeria's development since inception. To this end, it recommends a set of pro-active strategies for strengthening the anti-corruption war in Nigeria in order to adequately eradicate the evil so as to enable the country to realize its long-term socio-economic development objectives. The paper adopts the Clientele Theory. It depends essentially on data from secondary sources such as books, journal articles, government publications, among other relevant documents. Online materials were also consulted. The data were analyzed qualitatively using the descriptive analytical method in order to achieve the primary objective of the study.

Keywords: Corruption; Democracy; Development; Governance;

Introduction

The preponderance of corruption which found its way into the political landscape of Nigeria at independence has remained a major feature of its governance and politics till date and the remote cause of the country's underdevelopment. With the attainment of political independence in 1960, there was a latent optimism that Nigeria would attain rapid and sustained growth, eradicate poverty and ensure an improvement in the living standard of its people. This was reinforced by unprecedented large inflow from oil exports a decade after. Unfortunately, the development tragedy of the country has largely been unstable. The development experience of the post-independence period has been characterize by the premature termination of the economic take-off of the 1970s, dramatic reversals in per capita income and consumption gains and the growing pauperization of a large segment of the population (Iwayemi, 1994). Despite her richness in human and material resources, Nigeria is currently one of the world's twenty poorest countries (Afeikhena, 2004:205). Its GDP per capita has fallen from $1160 in 1980 to $250 in 1997. It is estimated that one third of the country's population consists of poor people and ten percent extremely poor. The proportion of the population with access to safe drinking water, electricity and modern health care facilities has declined from an average of 60 per cent in the early 1980s to 40 per cent in 1997 (Afeikhena, 2004:205).

Fundamentally, the current democratic dispensation which began in May 1999, and was received a warmth welcome by majority of Nigerians with great optimism that real development and progress would soon be engendered has also not made significant improvements in the living standard of the people as sustainable economic growth and good governance still appear to be very far from actualization owing to large scale corruption that thrives in the country. While considerable progress has been made in the

area of personal freedoms and liberties since the transition, flashpoints of ethnic, communal, religious and resource conflicts persist. Exacerbating this is the failure of government to address key issues affecting economic performance such as poverty alleviation, resource distribution, infrastructure development and security (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2001).To this extent, therefore, this paper, examines the effects of corruption on governance and development in Nigeria. It also reveals the factors or conditions that pave way for corruption in the country and makes recommendations on how to reposition and strengthen the anti-corruption crusade to completely eradicate corruption so as to enable the country attain its expected level of development progress.

Conceptualizing Governance, Corruption and Development

It is pertinent to mention that the notion of governance remains one of the numerous concepts that lack precision in terms of definition. In other words, there is obviously no agreement among scholars as to what constitutes the universal definition of the concept. Hence, the concept has attracted a vast array of divergent definitions by different scholars and authors according to their respective understanding of the idea. The World Bank (1992) defines governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. Dethier (1999) conceives it in a similar manner as the science of government behavior and performance, including the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. These definitions, by all indications appear to be broad and heavily lay emphasis on the development potentials or attributes of governance, which captures the whole essence of the idea.

Like governance, the concept of 'corruption' has also received considerable attention in the literature. It is so pervasive and endemic and the phenomenon is prevalent in all societies irrespective of their levels of development and locations on the globe. However, its prevalence differs from society to society in terms of degree, manifestation and constituents. The implication of this is that the concept of corruption is not new and cannot be attributed to a particular continent, country or society; it is a universal phenomenon that has saddled governments all over the world with huge and long term task of combating it. It cuts across nations, cultures and races. This explains why Saliu (2012) alludes that corruption has no colour barrier; neither does it have a regional barrier. In view of this, corruption cannot be said to be limited to the public sector alone, it also permeates all spheres of the private sector in large scales.

Importantly, as with governance, corruption also lacks a clear-cut universally acceptable definition by all or most scholars that often engage the concept. As Yaqub (2007) explains, the difficulty involved in defining it stems from the fact that it has some cultural traits. What is corruption in a clime may not be so in another. What exhibits corruption in the public sector may not necessarily be good indicators when related to the private sector (Saliu, 2012). In other words, what constitutes corruption in one society or country is most likely to differ from others. Despite the difficulty associated with the definition of corruption, various attempts have been made at defining it. However, it is pertinent to mention that most of the definitions offered in favour of corruption by scholars largely reflect their individual world-views, backgrounds, notions and

area of personal freedoms and liberties since the transition, flashpoints of ethnic, communal, religious and resource conflicts persist. Exacerbating this is the failure of government to address key issues affecting economic performance such as poverty alleviation, resource distribution, infrastructure development and security (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2001).To this extent, therefore, this paper, examines the effects of corruption on governance and development in Nigeria. It also reveals the factors or conditions that pave way for corruption in the country and makes recommendations on how to reposition and strengthen the anti-corruption crusade to completely eradicate corruption so as to enable the country attain its expected level of development progress.

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of corrupt, cynical, exploitative governance (Diamond, 2004). More specifically, the World Bank refers to such phenomenon as the extensive personalization of power, denial of fundamental human rights, widespread corruption, and the prevalence of unelected and unaccountable government (Afeikhena, 2004). From the foregoing, it can be posited that the core problem of development is bad governance. The indispensable condition for sustainable human development is good governance. Development requires appropriate government policies to foster savings and investment, but it also requires that public services and institutions that improve human capital, foster social trust, and thereby stimulate production and exchange. All of this is the product of good governance (Diamond, 2004).

Importantly, a historical excursion into Nigeria's political development, especially the First and Second Republics, will confirm that politicians' initial preoccupation was to use the political apparatus for their own personal gains or those of their families, ethnic group or tribe. It will not be totally true to allege that right from the onset, politicians were corrupt. The onset of political corruption came with the deliberate thwarting of the accountability and control measures, which the colonial government had institutionalized in the Westministerial parliamentary system of government. Such control and accountability devices as the Question Time and the Public Account Committee (PAC) were rendered ineffective and subsequently abandoned (Agara and Olarinmoye, 2009). What took place then was the use of political machinery as a self perpetuating apparatus for self aggrandizement and enrichment, with the struggle for political ascendancy assuming a primordial status with all its opportunities and paraphernalia of office, which the incumbent if privileged to assume a do-or-die (zero-sum game) dimension (Agara, 2012). Adamolekun (1985) has noted that this was partly the reason for the military incursion into power. Corruption is therefore at the root of Nigeria's political instability and national insecurity.

From 1966 to 1984, Nigeria experienced four military coups d'etat; the leaders of the three of them cited pervasive political corruption as the main reason for overthrowing the government. And each new government instituted some measures to address the menace. Since 1966, no Federal Government has failed to make the fight against corruption an aspect of its reform programme (Asobie, 2012). Unfortunately, the corrective Military itself is also highly corrupt as evidences abound to the effect of massive corruption as perpetrated by successive Military Governments. This underscores the common perception that the phenomenon of corruption and military rule are peculiar to Third World nations. Caiden (1979:294) lends credence to this assertion by stating that these two issues are generally "regarded as exotic subjects related to underdevelopment, a stage which it was assumed Western societies have long outgrown". However, it is pertinent to note that the menace of corruption is a universal challenge as the evil breeze blows every human society, but the effects, no doubt, is much in developing nations.

In Nigeria, to be more precise, the Centre for Advanced Social Sciences (CASS), Port Harcourt, in a seminar in December 1993 noted the devastating consequences of corruption, particularly in government. It noted that development has not benefited ordinary Nigerians because of corruption (Amuriji, 2003:143). In Nigeria, most workers are more interested in the spoil and patronage of office than in serving the masses, thereby hindering development. Corruption has not only weakened the moral fabric of the

country, it has also wrecked havoc in its body politics. It has subverted the rule of law, eroded confidence in the judiciary, undermined Nigeria's ability for self-development, discouraged the habit of industry, discipline, honesty, dedication and hardwork and further made nonsense of public accountability. Worst of all, it has made patriotism nearly impossible in Nigeria (Okereke, 2009). Political corruption is also cited, from time to time, by insurgent and rebellious groups in Nigeria as the major reason for their acts of insurgency or rebellion. This applies to the Agbekoya, the Odua Peoples Congress, the Movement for the Survival of the Sovereign State of Biafra, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta and Boko Haram (Asobie, 2012).

According to Igbuzor (2008), in an opinion poll conducted by one of the Nigerian daily newspapers, Nigeria picked corruption, unemployment and bad leadership as the worst problems hindering the country's development. A total of 671 respondent or 70 per cent of the 1,080 picked corruption as one of the worst problems hindering the nation's advancement. Evidently, since the return to civilian rule in 1999, the public sector has been accused of various corrupt practices. The National Assembly, for instance, is one arm of government mostly accused of all manners of corruption. In the House of Representatives alone, corruption cases have rocked the seat of the Speaker, from the certificate forgery case of Salisu Buhari to corrupt charges against the immediate past, Dimeji Bankole. There has been a series of contract scams, accusations and counter-accusations in both chambers of the National Assembly. More prominent, the Presidency, state Governors, Ministers, and company Chief Executive Officers and many other top government functionaries have also been accused of corruption. Diepreye Alamiesiegha, Tafa Balogun, Bode George, Cecelia Ibru among others have been jailed for one form of corruption or the other. Many others are being prosecuted; many more have their cases swept under the carpet, while some remain at large (Fasakin, 2012). Attesting to this, between 1960 and 1999 about $400bn was lost to corruption. The figure for the period between 2000 and 2009 was $139bn (Akinyemi, 2010; Ejelike, 2011).

Thus, not surprisingly, Nigeria has been receding in all the major indicators of development. The per capita income of the country as well as life expectancy has fallen to a criminal level. This was the point that Mrs. Hilary Clinton was making during her August visit in 2009 (Clinton, 2009). On that occasion, she had taken on the country's leaders on the appalling governance environment in the country. She was disappointed and angered that as the sixth exporter of oil in the world, the telling level of poverty in Nigeria is not justifiable. Although the government was not pleased with her scathing remarks, which some had termed as undiplomatic, the home truths contained in her statement can hardly be controverted (Saliu, 2012). Democratic governance in the country therefore faces a big threat from the thorough-bred corrupt environment in the country. As corruption swells up the cost of running the democratic enterprise in the country usually to the advantage of political and bureaucratic leaders, the vast majority of Nigerians are made to face the consequences of an unfriendly and unfavourable economic climate (The Guardian, September 30, 2011).

From the foregoing, it is not an overstatement to posit that corruption has devalued the quality of Nigerian democracy, as well as the quality of the lives of Nigerians (Saliu, 2012). Thus, as an upshot, in Nigeria, corruption has been accepted more as a way of life, and often a corrupt public official or bureaucrat is hailed and

respected by his community. The irony is that people failed to appreciate that what he/she has embezzled is actually meant for millions of other people and that it could be used to change their life. But the reality is that corruption is hindering the process of economic growth and development and is also considered as an obstacle in the democratization process. Although corruption is a world-wide phenomenon, it is worse in Nigeria and it has impacted negatively on the country's development process (Okereke, 2009). Until the ugly trend is adequately tackled, democracy would make an insignificant impact on developmental efforts in Nigeria.

Effects of Corruption on Governance and Development in Nigeria

A critical and comprehensive discussion on the generally acknowledged unimpressive government performance and the crisis of development in Nigeria cannot be achieved without bringing corruption to the fore. The cancerous ailment of corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian State, thereby bringing so many unprecedented negative consequences upon the governance and development of the country. Despite all practical efforts by successive governments in Nigeria to exterminate the undesirable phenomenon, corruption has remained unabated and still rears its ugly head in all the spheres of the country with its visible devastating effects that have come to constitutes an issue of great concern to both local and international observers of the development process and of governance in Nigeria. This therefore precipitates an excursion on some of the notable implications of corruption for governance and development in Nigeria. As Gardiner and Lyman (1978:5) have argued "corruption involves more than a few dollars (in this case Naira) changing hands between sleazy characters. Corruption is development where people don't want them or where communities aren't ready for them…It is something we all pay for". The implication of the foregoing assertion is that the effects or consequences of corruption do not know any bound in a society where the menace thrives unabated. Both the perpetrators of corruption and the innocent share the brunt.

In Nigeria, corruption poses a serious governance and development challenge. In the political realm, it undermines democracy and good governance by flouting or even subverting formal processes. Thus, corruption undermines the legitimacy of government and democratic values of trust and tolerance. More generally, corruption erodes the institutional capacity of government as procedures are disregarded, resources are siphoned, and public offices are bought. Corruption in elections and in legislative bodies reduces accountability and distorts representation in policymaking; corruption in the judiciary compromises the rule of law; and corruption in public administration results in the unfair and inefficient provision of services (Aiyede, 2006). More often than not the institutional mechanism for addressing the scourge of corruption has really not resulted in any meaningful outcome on the menace, as public office holders manipulate and undermine the mechanics for stamping out corruption. It has become a common tradition in Nigeria for public administrators to behave as though public service is their personal business, thus undermining procedures and shifting rules and regulations at the behest of the public. The elites eschewed transparency and abhorred rules and regulations, broke laws, violated due process and crudely stole from the public coffers (Jega, 2009).

This lack of respect for constitutive and regulative rule got to a crescendo during the military era, especially during the Babangida and Abacha regimes in Nigeria (Fatai, 2012). The Abacha family, for instance, was reported to have handed over750 million dollars of the state funds back to the Nigerian government illegally amassed by the former leader; about a 3-6 billion dollar estate was left by the past leader of which was government property but illegally converted to his son's private property (The Guardian, November 11, 1998). The effects of years of dictatorial and corrupt governance by successive military administrations are glaringly manifesting in the psyche and political culture of the recent crop of elected representatives under democratic rule who prefer to loot their country and disregard constitutional order rather than give good governance, which is the dividend of democracy to their people. The soaring cases of high profile corruption cases continue to give credence to the fact that corruption would not abate in Nigeria, as government and its agents have politicized the anti-graft process (Fatai, 2012)

Corruption has also brought undeserved effects on the credibility of elections and their results in Nigeria. Without mincing words, corruption makes election results in Nigeria to have very little or nothing to do with the performance in office of politicians. Precisely because performance is not a critical factor in electoral outcome, the incentive to perform is very weak. And because corruption is effective in achieving electoral victory the incentive to resort to corrupt practices is very high. The main decisive factors in the outcome of elections have been ethnicity; intimidation and massive vote buying and rigging (Aiyede, 2006). As far back as the 1950s, vote buying and rigging have been identified as major characteristics of elections in Nigeria (Dudley, 1973, 1982; FGN, 1987). The Human Right Watch (2004) in a detailed report on the 2003 elections observed that the elections were marred by serious incidents of violence, which left scores dead and many others injured. According to the report, 'The scale of violence and intimidation, much of which went unreported called into questions the credibility of these elections'. It went further: 'The majority of serious abuses were perpetrated by members or supporters of the ruling party, the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). In a number of locations, elections simply did not take place as group of armed thugs linked to political parties and candidates intimidated and threatened voters in order to falsify results' (Human Right Watch 2004:1). The above claims obviously depict the real nature of politics and governance in Nigeria. Governance in Nigeria has become an exercise in organized corruption, leading to abuse of formal procedures and the resultant negative perception of government by the already demoralized and disinterested citizens.

Beyond the political and bureaucratic dysfunctions, corruption also undermines economic development by generating considerable distortions and inefficiency. In the private sector, corruption increases the cost of business through the price of illicit payments. It raises the management cost of negotiating with officials and increases the risk of agreements being breached. Beside, the possibility of detection and the consequent scandal and penalty may be real. Although some claim corruption reduces costs by cutting red tape, the availability of bribes also induce officials to contrive new rules and delays. It also distorts the playing field, shielding firms with connections from competition and thereby sustaining inefficient firms. Corruption also generates economic distortions in the Nigerian public sector by diverting public investment into capital projects in the forms of bribes and kickbacks. Often, public officials increase the

technical complexity of public sector projects to conceal or pave way for such dealings, thus further distorting investment. Corruption also lowers compliance with construction, environmental, or other regulations, reduce the quality of government services and infrastructure and increases budgetary pressure on government (Aiyede, 2006). It is claimed that approximately US$ 200 billion was invested in Nigeria, between 1973 and 1993, with very little development to show for it (World Bank, 1995).

Corruption also poses a serious challenge to Nigeria's image and prestige in the international community. The external image of Nigeria that was positive in 1970s has nose-dived into negativity to the extent that the international community does not seem to be too pleased with Nigeria. Under the Fourth Republic, Nigeria has been excluded from the G20 group of influential countries in the world (Saliu, 2012). She was not an effective force in Tony Blair Commission (Landsberg, 2008). Unfortunately, Nigeria needs the good-will and support of the international community to work through her development agenda. The image of the country is very important in this regard. The image of being a corrupt nation is not too enabling. Her policy makers need to be aware that the mere commendation of Nigeria in the speeches of world leaders at the level of UN represents the first line in diplomatic practice and an endorsement in the implementation of neo-liberal policies that will be more beneficial to them. The perception of Nigeria as an all-time finalist in a global competition for corruption is still very much relevant. The influx of Nigerians into other countries, some of them doing menial jobs and serving jail terms, cannot be divorced from the pervasive corrupt environment and its negative effects on development and in grinding the nation (Saliu, 2010b). It can be argued that corruption has battered the corporate image of Nigeria and its citizenry. The way Nigerian citizens are perceived and treated overseas calls for an urgent redemption of the national image of the country at home and abroad. The consistent enlisting of Nigeria among the top most corrupt countries of the world by the Transparency International and other global corruption monitoring organizations has stigmatized and dealt a heavy blow on the human integrity and prestige of its citizens who have been labeled the most dishonest and unworthy people to be trusted on any ground.

Factors/Conditions that Pave way for Corruption in Nigeria

In the context of Nigeria, the cancerous disease of the high level corruption that is plaguing the country has roots in a number of obvious factors that are partly inherent features of the Nigerian state. The most notable of these factors is weak institutions and structures. There are structures and indeed laws in place to check corruption, but these structures are, however, not vibrant and effective. As such, they lack the capability to fully carry out their assignments. This is borne out of poor funding and/or the itching fingers of the officials who are saddled with the responsibility of combating corruption (Adewole, 2009). Another issue in the weakness of the institution is the incidence of the imperial presidency, which tends to make government institutions work according to its dictates (Saliu, 2012). In fact, in most cases, it is often in the institutions and structures that are set up to combat corruption that huge amounts of corruptions rocking the country are perpetrated.

Another influential factor in this regard is the nature and conception of politics in Nigerian. This is in three dimensions. The goal of ideological politicking is still a tall

order in Nigeria. In the absence of any ideological attachment, money becomes the soul of business. The only meaning people have for politics is to use it to capture political power, which, in turn guarantees access to money. Politics itself becomes a business and as a business the more money you through into it, the more the profit. It therefore means that politics is an expensive enterprise in the country. With the near absence of conformity with any laws on campaign expenses, politicians raise money from many sources to realize their political ambitions; they need money to campaign, to "grease the palms" of the party elders and others, hire party agents, transport supporters, etc. (Adetula, 2008). To even pick up a nomination form requires spending a fortune. After an election, litigation may follow. This will require spending a lot of money. After the cases have been disposed-off by the courts, the electorates expect continuous financial handouts from their elected representatives. Some of the elected representatives and political appointees cannot resist the pressures coming from divergent backgrounds and, as a result, they are lured into corruption (Saliu, 2012). As Osaghea (2002:21) rightly noted:

> It is a popular Nigerian saying, which took root under colonial rule that, 'government's business is no man's businesses. There was thus nothing wrong with stealing states funds, especially if they were used to benefit not only the individual but also members of his community. Those who had the opportunity to be in government were expected to use the power and resources at their disposal to advance private and communal interests.

Stemming from the above, corruption thus continues to thrives in Nigeria because elected officials need huge financial resources to satisfy and fulfill the promises they made to informal groups such as close family members, friends and acquaintances as well as their immediate communities who may have contributed in one way or the other to their ascension to public office, thereby elevating sectional interests above and against the collective interest of the generality of the populace they are meant to serve.

Also, worthy of note is the erosion of societal values. There has been a bastardization of social values in Nigeria. There is little attachment to the values of integrity and honesty. Money is the beginning and the end of everything. Hardly anyone asks any question about the sources of wealth anymore. All that seems to matter is money. People worship money, as such almost everybody is in the business of making money. The society generally accords recognition to those who have money. When people visit you, they do so mostly to get money. This explains why those who have the opportunity to steal do not always hesitate to do so (Yahaya, 2011). Corruption can hardly be eliminated in a society that celebrates highly corrupt individual. The urge for corruption is aggravated by the obvious fact that your status, relevance and prestige in the society are the function of how wealthy you are regardless of whether or not you have coveted your wealth from the public treasury. Giving this situation, people no longer think of the questions the society would ask as to what constitutes one's source of wealth. All that matters is to get money by all means in order to be counted among the so-called important personalities in the society.

The lack of a credible judiciary has also greased the elbow of corruption in Nigeria. Many Nigerians have the belief that the judiciary in the country is aiding corruption. All that is required is to set aside a huge sum of money for litigation out of one's loot to corrupt the judges (Saliu, 2012). Indeed, it is noteworthy to state that the conduct of some members of the jury has raised serious questions on the integrity and incorruptibility of the bench (Okereke, 2009). It was partly in line with this that on August 6, 2006, the former president of the country, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, accused the judiciary of corruption. He maintained that the institution was partly responsible for the perception of Nigerians that they could not get justice without money (The Guardian, August 7, 2005). This accusation came at a time when the then Chief Justice of the Federation, Justice Uwaise (rtd) was being investigated by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for bribery. The accusation dealt a blow on the integrity of the judiciary especially at time when the nature of politics in the country required a strong and virile judicial system.

Poor incentive for public servants and government involvement in economic and commercial activities is also a major contributory factor. When the state involves in large investments of capital, especially those channeled towards provision of goods, services and resources below market prices, public officers enjoy incentives to seek rents. Civil service structures that are characterized by politically motivated hiring, patronage and nepotism, and poor remuneration are usually hives of corruption (Aiyede, 2006). Nigerians experience attest to this. When the incentive structures in the civil service are poor, the efficiency of workers as well as their ability to affect policies, such as that directed towards reducing poverty, will remain very low (Salusi, 2001). In a recent summary of the factor affecting the efficiency of the Nigerian civil service, Ajayi (1998) has noted the following: Overstaffing and the closely related poor remuneration of employees in public service as the key factors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Corruption is no doubt, widespread in Nigeria. It has eaten deep into the fabric of the society, constituting a major bane to the country's development. Despite all practical and rigorous efforts made in an attempt to ensuring a corruption-free Nigeria, substantial and impressive progress is yet to be achieved as the menace continues to pervade every aspect of the country's national life in an uncontrollable manner. So entrenched and embedded, the adverse effects of corruption on Nigeria are obviously enormous, and the unwholesome situation continues to thrive due to several factors including the nature of politics, weak institutions and structures, lack of a credible judiciary, politicization of the anti-corruption crusade, eroded societal values among other factors. To this end, for Nigeria's development dreams and aspirations to become realities, the phenomenon of corruption must first of all be adequately addressed. There is the need for the adoption of a holistic approach if the on-going war against corruption is to produce desired results. The study therefore recommends the following strategies as part of the all-in-one approach to effectively tackle corruption in the country:

Every quarter of the Nigerian society, both formal and informal must join hands with governments at all levels with sincere sense of purpose and determination to exterminate the ravaging cancer of corruption in our society. In this sense, the civil

society being the most critical segment of the society must be put in the fore-front of the anti-corruption crusade as it has become crystal clear that government itself alone can no longer be entrusted with this important task of fighting corruption.

The Federal Government must itself demonstrate a strong political will in the fight against corruption. The government must allow the two independently constituted anti-corruption agencies, the EFCC and the ICPC, to operate by their rules of establishment, and cease from using the agencies as instrument of political oppression and subjugation against opponents and critics. There should be no sacred cows; the anti-corruption agencies should be properly strengthened and made to be neutral and fearless in carrying out their duties.

Most fundamentally, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria must be amended. This is because the constitution is faulty in many regards. Thus there is the urgent need to review the constitution in order to reflect and respond to the demand of Nigerians for a corruption-free society. In this case, Section 308 of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution that grants immunity which shields public office holders including the Governors and the President from being investigated or prosecuted while in office should be abrogated in the constitution as that has given them much opportunity to loot and embezzle public treasure without fear of any resultant consequences. Removing the immunity Clause from the constitution is very critical in the war against corruption as that would help to build public trust and confidence and serve as concrete proof to the citizens that government is sincerely ready and determined to tackle the pervading trend of corruption in the country headlong.

The judiciary must operate in absolute independence and government should stop unnecessary pressure and interference in its affairs so as to enable it function effectively.

The government should also endeavour to improve the general welfare of the entire society so as to reduce the urge or propensity to engage in corruption among members of the public. Moreover, there is the need to improve the working conditions of public servants generally so as to reduce the rate at which they seek grants and compensation through corrupt practices.

Religious organizations have important role to play. They need to complement government efforts in the anti-corruption crusade by intensifying their teachings on the importance of the moral values of honesty, integrity and fear of God to their members so as to make the society at large a better place for all.

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Abstract

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