

## **CORRUPTION: FACTORS AND EFFECTS- A CRITICAL EXAMINATION**

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### Introduction

The arguments that colonial rule and military incursion into politics are responsible for corruption are sound and the fact remains that different forms of government have not been able to avoid corruption. Democracies, monarchies etc have all felt the rampaging effects of the corruption menace. For instance, direct payments to voters (voters buying) to guarantee success at elections has a long history, tracing back to Great Britain and the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>1</sup>In Spain, favours were also exchanged for votes particularly where party dues and donations and public subsidies are unable to finance campaigns as well as the poor enforcement of existing laws.<sup>2</sup>Also, it is not only states that were colonized that have experienced corruption in varying degrees.

Many other direct and indirect factors can be blamed for corruption in modern societies. Some of them are as follows.

### **The existence of regulations and authorizations**

To be able to perform its duties owed to the people, every government usually has regulations and authorizations in place which are aimed at ensuring order within the state. It will be a lawless society where there are no regulations as it will be unclear to the general populace what steps are to be taken in the pursuit of any government related activity. For example, regulations and authorizations are necessary for any person who is interested in mining or in oil and gas exploration and production. The existence of regulations and authorizations ensures that there is some degree of order with respect to drilling activities. The absence of such regulations would mean that any person could engage in drilling and would be at liberty to act in total disregard to the needs of the people.

With these rules and regulations come the problems of corruption particularly in a situation where there is monopoly in the grant of authorizations. Where there is only one license issuing office for instance, it paves the way for corruption as those interested in obtaining a license would have no other choice but to pay bribes when requested. It has been argued that this kind of corruption can be eliminated by setting up several offices and decentralizing the power to grant the authorizations or permits.<sup>3</sup> The disadvantage of such an approach is that it will constitute a heavy burden on the budget of any state.

Another reason why the existence of regulations and authorizations creates an avenue for corruption is the lack of transparency in such regulation. As one writer puts it, "*rules and regulations are required to maintain a sense of fair play, to prevent disastrous conflicts; keep*

*greed, check; minimize socially undesirable consequences; and generally to ensure that players and referees abide by certain accepted standards of moral conduct and good behaviour.”<sup>4</sup>* Where the regulations are not clear and the populace does not know where requisite authorizations can be obtained from, it encourages corruption to thrive.

The absence of impartiality in the administration of certain office is also a causative factor for corruption. The regulations ought to be applied at the same standard to all and sundry. This however is only a utopian ideal particularly in a state where systemic corruption has taken root. Preference is usually given to the bribe payers while those who are not knowledgeable in the workings of the system will be left out to dry. Where rules are subject to frequent and arbitrary changes to the benefit of some and to the detriment of others, it becomes increasingly difficult if not impossible for persons to participate effectively.

### **Penalty Systems and Weak Enforcement Measures**

The penalty systems put in place for the punishment of corruption in any state qualify as an indirect cause of corruption. One of the functions of punishment is to act as a deterrent to criminals and other members of the public. It may be argued that the higher the severity of the punishment, the lesser the instances of its occurrence. A flaw of such an approach is that while increased punitive measures for corruption may reduce its incidence, it may invariably lead to demands for higher bribes by bribe taker considering the increased risk.

There are a myriad of problems associated with the existing penalty systems for corruption in any state. Weak enforcement measures by states are factors which militate against proper punishment of corruption. This is because there appears to be a wide gap between the penalties specified in the laws and regulations and the penalties that are effectively imposed.<sup>5</sup> As such, punishments that are actually imposed may be the minimum punishment for the particular offence. Such a situation is likely to occur where the law governing an offence provides a leeway for accused persons and lawyers to wriggle out from. In Nigeria for instance, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act 2004 provides for offence relating to financial malpractices as follows:

*“A person who, being an officer of a bank or other financial institution or designation of non-financial institution-*

- a) fails or neglect to secure compliance with the provisions of this Act; or*
- b) Fails or neglect to secure authenticity of any statement submitted pursuant to the provisions of this Act, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or to a fine of five hundred thousand naira (500,000) or to both such imprisonment and fine.”<sup>6</sup>*

The option of fine in such a law seeking to punish corruption paves the way for further corruption particularly where the judges follow a trend of imposing the minimum punishment.

Plea bargaining also has its way of increasing incidences of corruption where it is abused. Corrupt politically exposed persons and public officials are offered 'sweet deals' which involve little or no jail term for acts of embezzlement and fraud. In such situations, the deterrent ability of punishment will be severely whittled down as persons would readily engage in acts of corruption knowing that they would eventually gain their freedom with nothing more than a slap on the wrist.

There is also the problem of selective imposition of punishment or witch hunting. This is where persons occupying top positions in government such as the president, use their political influence to ensure that persons punished for acts of corruption are their perceived political enemies or rivals. In such a state, it is common knowledge to the populace that a particular individual has committed numerous acts of corruption but is shielded by the 'powers that be' from prosecution while others who could have constituted a threat to the incumbent are singled out for their acts of corruption.

In most government offices, it can be said that there is permanence of office as most employees are hardly dismissed from office despite their commission of multiple, known acts of corruption. The bureaucracy that is a major characteristic of government offices has a deterrent effect on potential accusers who are not easily minded to go through the rigours of prosecution that would result in an eventual dismissal. The potential accuser also stands the risk of being seen as a whistle blower which will make them attract more enemies. The only way to avoid this situation is to have tolerance for certain acts of corruption, thus increasing the spate of corruption.

On the deterrent capacity of punishment, it cannot be said for certain that increased punishment would necessarily translate to reduced incidences of corruption crimes. Such an assertion would only be possible in theory. In practice, it is difficult if not impossible to know whether the fear of punishment alone would deter criminals from committing crimes. It has been said that it is not the fear of punishment that deters the calculating criminal from crime, so much as the fear of detection.<sup>7</sup> In a state where corruption has become the norm, detection is not as feared, thus paving the way for more corruption.

### **The Existence of Discretionary Powers**

Discretionary powers exercisable by public officials provide ample opportunities for corruption to thrive. It will be difficult if not impossible for regulations to be put in place which will cover every conceivable situation that may arise. There must of necessity be some leeway within which public officials are to interpret and implement the rules and regulations. The existence of discretionary powers paves the way for corruption as there are firms willing to pay

bribes in order to get an interpretation of the regulations in their favour as well as interpretations aimed at lightening any expected burden.

The exercise of discretionary powers in favour of bribe payers is to the benefit of the public officials since it is a viable avenue for self enrichment and augmenting of their incomes. It has been said that whenever regulatory officials have discretion to exercise, an incentive for bribery exists.<sup>8</sup>

The exercise of discretion by public officials is a common feature with respect to investment projects. High level public officials have a considerable amount of discretion to exercise concerning public investment projects. As one writer puts it,

*Public projects have, at times, been carried out specifically to provide opportunities to some individuals or political groups to get “commissions” from those who are chosen to execute the projects. This has reduced the productivity of such expenditure and has resulted in projects that would not have been justified on objective criteria of investment selection such as cost-benefit analysis.<sup>9</sup>*

Whenever the government provides for goods and services below market prices, such activities also create room for the exercise of discretionary powers on the part of public officials. The exercise of the discretion becomes necessary where demand for the good or service exceeds supply. The final decision on who will benefit from the service will lie with the public official who may be tempted to exercise their discretion in favour of those who pay a bribe. Such will be to the benefit of the users of the service as well as the public officials while being to the detriment of those who have no “connections” or who are unable or willing to pay bribe.

Public officials may also be called upon to exercise their discretionary powers with respect to:

*“Provision of tax incentives against income taxes value-added taxes, and foreign trade taxes, which may be worth millions of dollars in terms of the present value of reduced future liabilities to those who benefit from them;*

*Decisions as to the particular use of private land (zoning laws) that determine whether a piece of land can be used only for agriculture, and thus have low market value, or for high-rise buildings, and thus be very expensive;*

*Decisions as to the use of government-owned land, for example, for logging purposes, which may also be worth a lot to the recipients. Major cases of corruption related to permissions to cut trees from publicly owned forests, or*

*to exploit public lands for their mineral wealth, have been reported in several countries;*

*Decisions that authorize major foreign investments often undertaken in connection with domestic interests, which often provide the privileged investors with monopoly power;*

*Decisions related to the sale of public sector assets, including the right to extract natural resources;*

*Decisions on the privatization of state-owned enterprises and on the conditions attached to that process, such as the degree of regulation of the industry; and*

*Decisions providing monopoly power to particular export, import or domestic activities.”<sup>10</sup>*

No state can function properly in the absence of discretionary powers being vested in its public officials. It does not matter how elegantly drafted the regulations are; to properly carry out the duties, certain degrees of discretion must be vested in the officials. It is the application of this discretion that is usually subject to abuse and causing corruption. The discretion may exist with high level public officials as well as those in the lower cadre. It is an unavoidable necessity because if everything must be done “by the book”; it will cause general paralysis and bring the entire administrative machinery to a grinding halt.<sup>11</sup>

### **Poor incentive structures**

In many developing countries, the level of public sector wages has a role to play in determining the level of corruption. Where there is a low level of wages for civil servants, there is an increased temptation to engage in acts of corruption. The reason is not far-fetched. Increasing cost of living in any particular locality without a corresponding increase in wages invariably means that civil servants will not have enough money to meet their basic needs. Where it becomes evident that the wages are not sufficient to meet the needs of a household in any particular month, then an extra source of income must be found and exploited. Where detection is not feared and is a distant possibility, persons may be forced to augment their low wages from bribes collected in the performance of their official duties.

The effect of poor incentive structures on society goes beyond the propensity to take bribes. Poor incentives means that people will be more minded to take job opportunities where absenteeism will not be an issue. This will give them ample opportunity to focus their attention

at other jobs which they can use to augment their paltry incomes. This will no doubt have a negative effect on the civil service, meaning that people coming to the public offices will get poor service delivery. This in turn will increase the likelihood of bribes being demanded for to 'quicken' the service delivery process.

It can be said that there is corruption due to need and corruption due to greed. This is because even though incentive structures may be poor in any particular country, it is not everyone who engages in corruption that is doing so on the basis of necessity. For some, their acts of corruption are propelled by an equally powerful force: greed. Thus while it can be said that low public sector wages may provide tempting conditions for corruption, that in itself cannot be a proper conclusion to the matter. This is because regardless of income level, there are persons who are psychologically disposed to accepting bribes. There are also those who are offered bribes that are too large to ignore. Poor incentive structure may increase the temptation for corruption but it does not automatically mean that if greater incentives are put in place, there would be lesser corruption.

According to Van Rijckeghem and Weder, while an increase in the wages level may reduce corruption, a very large increase would be required to reduce corruption to minimal levels.<sup>12</sup> The problem that arises with such an approach is that it will impose huge burdens on the budgets of any country. Even where the approach is implemented, it may have the effect of reducing the number of corrupt transactions without a corresponding decrease in the total amount of money exchanged in corrupt transactions. The rationale for this assertion is that reduction in the number of corrupt acts may lead to a demand for higher bribes on the part of those who continue to be corrupt.<sup>13</sup>

Some countries have taken the approach of increasing the level of salaries for public officers in sensitive government offices. In Singapore for instance, the wage policy is targeted at reducing corruption by paying huge salaries to minister and other top placed officials. As suggested earlier, while this approach may reduce the number of corrupt transactions, it may not necessarily translate to a reduction in the amount of money involved in corruption. Also, it will not stop persons who are psychologically disposed to acts of corruption or who do not see anything wrong in embezzling public funds for private use, to do so. In Nigeria, persons holding public office earn huge salaries but are constantly involved in scandals relating to corruption. In 2012, the former Governor of Delta State of Nigeria, James Ibori was indicted in the UK for acts of corruption and embezzlement. The former Governor of Bayelsa State of Nigeria, Diepreye Alamiyeseigha was also indicted for embezzlement of state funds. If poverty or low wage levels were the only reason for corruption, these persons ought not to have engaged in corruption. But in a political climate where corruption is tolerated, it is not unusual for rich politicians to continually seek out corrupt ways to amass public funds for their private use. That is why the ordinary Nigerian on the street may hold the view that entering public office is an

opportunity to participate in the sharing of the “national cake” and that once such an opportunity surfaces, efforts must be made to ensure that enough funds are amassed so that poverty will never arise again. While it is commendable for states to ensure that persons in the employ of government have reasonable wage levels that fit the cost of living, the fight against corruption must take an approach that goes beyond the increase of salaries of public officials.

Apart from the already discussed causes of corruption, several other causes do exist. The categories of causes of corruption are open ended. This is largely because what may constitute corruption in one society may be viewed upon differently in another. As such, some causes of corruption may be peculiar to a particular society. Since corruption is all pervading and can be found even in the most unlikely of places (such as religious organizations), the task of identifying every conceivable cause of corruption is a herculean one. The following may also constitute causes of corruption:

- Taxation
- Lack of accountability and transparency
- Spending decisions by government
- Financing of political parties by public office holders
- Nature of the bureaucracy
- Poor examples by the leadership

We shall now turn to the effects of corruption.

### **EFFECT OF CORRUPTION**

The effects of corruption have far reaching consequences for the present generation and for generations yet unborn. Corruption is a global phenomenon and its effects on individuals, institutions, countries and global development have made it an issue of universal concern.<sup>14</sup> Some have argued that corruption may not be such a bad thing and have made arguments in favour of corruption.<sup>15</sup> Regardless of these supporting arguments, the negative effects of corruption far outweigh whatever positive effects they may have. For instance, bribes may be said to easily ‘grease’ the wheel of bureaucracies and therefore enhance efficiency. On the other side of the coin, the bribes operate as an arbitrary tax which increases the cost of obtaining a service and rendering the rules and regulations obsolete. The following are some of those negative effects which make corruption an evil which needs to be nipped in the bud.

#### **i.) Reduced Investment**

Investment can hardly thrive in a corruption laden society. Any country having problems with corruption is invariably bound to have problems with both domestic and foreign investments. With regard to domestic investments, the economy of most states is sustained by small scale businesses. Where corruption is the norm rather than the exception, it becomes increasingly difficult to operate small businesses. Corruption operates as an obstacle to their

creation and growth and can have deleterious consequences on the economies of developing countries. Pressures are mounted on new entrants into the small business industry by local government officials for instance, to pay high costs which may or may not be legal, for licences and authorizations.<sup>16</sup> Corruption acts as an arbitrary tax on small businesses and the problems they face become increased since it is difficult for the burden of costs to be passed on to the final consumer of the product or service. Where the burdens that may be imposed on the proprietor of a small business are increased due to illegal demands for bribes, it will have a direct effect on the rate of investment in any country.

The larger enterprises are not completely immune from the rampaging effects of corruption. However, they are often better placed to handle the problems that are associated with corruption. As one author puts it:

- They have specialized departments that can deal with aggressive bureaucrats;
- They can use “*facilitators*” – individuals skilled in fighting through the jungle of opaque regulators and tax laws;
- Their size makes them more immune to the extortion of petty bureaucrats; and
- They can use their political power to influence relevant individuals in the public administration or to pursue rent-seeking activities not available to others.<sup>17</sup>

These large enterprises also have the ability to pass the increased costs caused by corruption to the final consumer of the product or service. This creates additional burden to the consumer who would have to spend more to obtain a particular service. In this regard, the effect may be felt more by the individual than the large enterprise. That said, there is no doubt that corruption has the effect of increasing the cost of doing business by large enterprises which has a direct effect on the level of investment in any country.

There is no end to when bribes may be demanded from a business, whether large or small. Procurement of leases for land and buildings; permission to engage in activities such as production, transport, storage, marketing, distribution, import and export; obtaining connections for water, gas, electricity, and telephone; having access to telex, fax and e-mail facilities etc can involve payment of substantial bribes at various stages.<sup>18</sup> Even after the business is a going concern, business owners may still have to make payments so that they do not fall into disfavor under a corrupt regime.

Reduced investments mean reduced employment opportunities. Corruption creates uncertainty in any market driven economy. One of the problems associated with bribes is that there is no certainty as to whether the service that the bribe was paid for will be performed. In such a climate of uncertainty, prospective investors will not be minded to invest their resources in any such country. This in turn has a negative impact on employment figures. It is not every person that can be employed by the government. Small businesses are largely responsible for the



numbers of employed individuals in most countries. Where the demands of corruption are too onerous and cannot easily be met by potential investors, it will invariably lead to increased unemployment. This may further give birth to the establishment of an underground economy where organized crime will readily thrive.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in any country is directly affected by high corruption levels. As said earlier, corruption acts as a pernicious and uncertain tax on businesses. It has been said that in Asia for instance, the countries with high corruption levels would have attracted more FDI if corruption has been lower, and their industrial policies would have been more effective.<sup>19</sup> Corruption reduces total investment and limits FDI but encourages public infrastructure investment.<sup>20</sup> In Pakistan, corruption has been identified as the 3<sup>rd</sup> greatest problem for companies doing business in Pakistan after government bureaucracy and poor infrastructure.<sup>21</sup> It therefore constitutes an obstacle for more FDI.

The importance of FDI to the growth of any economy cannot be underestimated. FDI generates economic activity in any country. It also creates employment opportunities and serves to beef up foreign exchange reserves. FDI can also bring technology knowhow and managerial and marketing skills that improve a country's international competitiveness, help develop valuable market outlets abroad, and strengthen foreign contacts and broaden the outlook of its business community.<sup>22</sup> FDI also plays a role in the provision of modern infrastructure by the government, the establishment of energy generating and distribution systems and such other services that are crucial to the achievement of the industrialization goals of most developing economies.

A country will only be able to reap the full benefits of FDI when the rate of corruption is largely diminished. It is impossible to find a completely corruption free state. That is only a utopian ideal. However, where the state has taken serious steps towards checkmating incidences of corruption, it increases the chances of greater FDIs. It is highly unlikely that long term investment projects will be carried out pursuant to FDIs as the uncertainty in corruption laden environments will no doubt discourage international investors. In such a climate, foreigners would only be willing to undertake shorter term investments which would consist mostly of activities to exploit the country's natural resources or to engage in quick yielding ventures that have little benefit to the growth of the economy.<sup>23</sup> The problem with such shorter term investments is that they do not impart the kind of knowledge or skills that will bring about industrial expansion in any developing country. This means that even though the resources of the country are being exploited, the moment the resource runs dry or another alternative resource becomes the option of choice, then the state is left with nothing that will be able to sustain it in this industrial era.

## ii.) Reduction of Public Revenue and Increase in Public Spending

Corruption has direct effects on public revenue and on public expenditure. In a corruption laden climate, rent seeking activities by high public officials causes an increase in public expenditure. The reason for such increases can be traced to the greed based corruption of the officials. Projects which are not directly beneficial to the members of the public at large are embarked upon while those that are keys to their survival and/or advancement are neglected. This is because mostly beneficial projects do not provide ample opportunities for embezzlement of public funds. Thus for instance, it has been said that corruption reduces expenditure on education and health as these sectors do not lend themselves easily to corrupt practices by the budget markers.<sup>24</sup> There is also reduced expenditure for operation and maintenance of infrastructure.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, there is increased public investment since public investment projects provide better opportunities for corruption to take place. These projects can easily be distorted in terms of size and composition by public officials who do so in the exercise of the discretion conferred on them. White elephant projects which have no immediate beneficial value are pursued since it is much more difficult to determine the costs involved in such projects. As such, there will be over invoicing and since there is no clear parameter to ascertain whether the amounts quoted are actually true, it provides ample opportunity for public officials and Politically Exposed Persons like Governors and Presidents to participate in corruption.

There is also a loss of government revenue due to corruption. Taxation is one of the key methods in which states generate revenue internally. However, due to the financial burdens which are closely associated with the payment of taxes and businesses, individuals may collude with tax collectors to lower the sums collected as taxes. The collection of customs duties is also another means by which states acquire internally generated revenue but this is also subject to abuse by customs officials who would collect bribes in order to reduce the sums payable as customs duties. The bribes are also given in order to expedite the processes involved in dealing with these officials. The officials in turn will turn a blind eye to the violation of rules and regulations. The effect of such actions is a reduction in government revenue which means that there will be fewer funds for government to pursue its stated objectives. The impact will be on the final consumers of government services who would get less than what they are ordinarily entitled to.

In Pakistan, a study estimated that if corruption induced leakages and mismanagement could be reduced by 50 percent, the tax to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), ratio would increase from 13.6 percent to over 15 percent.<sup>26</sup> A study of tariff exemptions in Zambia, Tanzania and Mali estimated that justified and unjustified exemptions produced a revenue shortfall of close to 50 percent.<sup>27</sup>

Corruption has direct financial consequences on the revenue of a state. Millions and billions of dollars that ought to have accrued to the governments of different countries have been lost through random acts of corruption committed against the state. A corrupt tax and customs system that favours some groups and individuals over others can destroy efforts to put a country on a sound fiscal basis and discredit reform.<sup>28</sup> Where corruption in the tax and customs system of any country is subject to functional checks and balances, the overall effect will be an increase in government revenue which is the goal of every independent state.

Corruption leading to reduced government revenue and increase government spending on frivolous projects could lead to adverse budgetary consequences which will mean that budgeted amounts will not deliver the required services. Where money intended for health and education is used instead for a project with no immediate or future beneficial value, it means invariably that both the education and health sectors will suffer adversely. New innovations will not be introduced into the sectors leading to obsolete infrastructure in an industry that is constantly advancing such as the health sector. This can easily happen in a state where corruption is rampant, leading to reduced services for those who need them to survive or advance as the case may be.

Apart from tax avoidance and loss of revenue through customs, government funds are also reduced drastically by direct embezzlement. Where grand corruption is rampant, public services are bound to suffer at the expense of corruption. In Nigeria for instance, road contracts may be awarded but the contractors will not carry out the contract. Some may carry out the contract but will use substandard materials in order to increase their gain.

Imagine a situation where a contract has been awarded for a bridge to join two cities and then substandard materials are used. The resulting disaster when the bridge collapses will be the loss of many lives and properties. Corruption costs lives. Where corruption is embedded, people participate more in rent seeking activities. The mindset of persons in governance in some countries is to acquire as much wealth as is possible before they are unseated from power.

Nigeria provides ready examples of situations where direct embezzlement has led to the reduction of government revenue. According to the Executive Director, Office of Drugs and Crime at the United Nations, Dr. Antonio Maria Costa, about US \$400 billion was stolen and stashed away in foreign banks by past corrupt leaders before 1999.<sup>29</sup> If these funds had been properly utilized, perhaps the country would have been more advanced industrially and otherwise. Under the Ibrahim Babangida regime in Nigeria (1985-1993), \$12.4 billion being the gulf war windfall was unaccounted for. In the Abacha regime, investigation of bribes to ease the award of a gas plant construction led to the freezing of accounts containing about \$100 million US Dollars.<sup>30</sup> In 2000, a total of more than \$1 billion US Dollars were found in various accounts throughout Europe.<sup>31</sup>

The impact of corruption on public spending and public revenue cannot be overestimated. Its effects are disastrous. Most countries in the world are poor or still developing not because they lack resources but because their resources end up in the hands of a few. Without proper checks on corruption, more money will be lost to greedy individuals and businesses. Sustainable development will be adversely affected and there will be a poor legacy left for unborn generations to follow.

### **iii.) Retardation of development**

In outlining the negative consequences of corruption, Bello-Imam listed retardation of economic growth, misallocation of talent, limitation of aid flows and negative impact on quality of infrastructure and public services amongst the negative effects corruption could have on a state.<sup>32</sup> All these factors contribute to retardation of development. In Pakistan, it has been said that many years of development effort have been lost due to consumption of development funds at a very large scale and because of years of overcharging for almost every item of work.<sup>33</sup> Where money intended for developmental purposes is used instead for personal enrichment, the development effort in a country must definitely suffer.

Corruption has a negative impact on economic development. No country in the throes of corruption can readily boast of economic stability. The effect of corruption on economic development is a stifling of economic growth. This is because corruption affects investment negatively which is a crucial ingredient to economic advancement. With little or no domestic or foreign investment, the developmental effort in any country will be thwarted. The reduction in public revenue and increases in government expenditure occasioned by corruption also have deleterious effects on economic growth and stability.

### Conclusion

The causes and effects of corruption on the economies of developing countries are deleterious. It goes without saying that for any country to advance economically; it must adopt stringent fiscal policies to balance its books. Corruption, like the cankerworm that it is, has the ability to retard genuine economic development plan. It is therefore our considered opinion that what causes corruption must be thoroughly diagnosed so as to quarantine whatever possible effects that may result therefrom. This task is onerous and should not be left to the Government alone. All hands must be on deck to nip this in the bud. The onus is on the Government to fashion out ways to stem the high corruption rate in the society.

The fight against corruption in Nigeria started way back in 1975, when Brigadier (later General) Murtala Mohammed overthrew General Yakubu Gowon. There were claims that General Gowon and some of his ministers were involved in corrupt practices. The level of corruption in Nigeria increased during Alhaji Shehu Shagari civilian government of 1979 to 1983. In December 1983 Major-General Muhammadu Buhari overthrew Shagari with a promise to bring all those found to be corrupt to justice and instill discipline in Nigerians. Buhari demonstrated his seriousness when he attempted to bring back Umaru Dikko from London to Nigeria in a cargo crate. It was a case of desperate situation requiring a desperate remedy! In August 1985, General Ibrahim Babangida overthrew General Buhari, with the excuse that General Buhari regime was callous and overzealous. From 1985 onwards corruption in Nigeria took a frightening dimension. Corruption became the norm and spiraled out of control. It was the same Ibrahim Babangida that annulled what has been acclaimed as the best election in Nigeria's history, June 12 1993 Presidential election. The endemic nature of corruption has never been in doubt in Nigeria. Government at all levels must show serious commitment in eradicating this hydra-headed monster and nipping it in the bud.

#### END NOTE

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