

GOVERNANCE AND THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.

Patrick Oluwole Ojo
Friday Aworawo
IfedayoTolu Elizabeth*

ABSTRACT

Various factors are said to be responsible for Nigeria's current status as an underdeveloped country. These range from historical colonial experience, political instability, the monoculture nature of the national economy, and the persistent lack of commitment to focused development strategies on the part of the political elites. The most popular among the prescriptions for tackling the phenomenon of underdevelopment emphasized macroeconomic policies, economic diversification, transparency and accountability in governance and even direct distribution of resource proceeds to the general population. These solutions have not been able to adequately address Nigeria's development challenges.

However, the crucial role of the regulatory institutions, especially their oversight functions, has arguably been the missing link in establishing the complimentary relationship between governance and development in Nigeria. This paper discusses the importance of governance institutions as a fundamental determinant of robust and sustainable social and economic development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Democracy, Corruption, Governance, Socio-economic development

* Department of Political Science and International Studies , Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past five decades, Nigeria has been governed by both democratic and non-democratic governments. The Nigerian military's incursion into politics in the country had been premised on the failure of previous democratic governments to initiate, foster and sustain development programs that could have brought about social and economic development. However, the military regimes that had ruled the Nigerian state for about 30 out of its 54 years as independent nation-state has also failed, on the most part, to establish the much expected social and economic development.

Socio-economic development; in terms of improvement in the living standards of the citizenry, is perhaps the basic expectation and reward for the citizens in the social contract agreement between the governors and the governed. What, then, has been the impact of governance on politics and economics in Nigeria from 1960 to the present? Understanding the impact of governance on the Nigerian economy will provide real insight into the gap which exist between the huge available national resources and the quest for development in Nigeria. The concerns emanating from evident gaps in the quest for and struggle by Nigerians for democracy *vis-a-vis* the fulfillment of pre-election promises of elected political elites; continue to generate debates in policy and academic cycles against the backdrop of unrepentant attitude of corruption by the political elites in the country. This concern is particularly evident in the apparent almost non-existent or grossly inefficient social amenities and dilapidated economic infrastructural facilities across Nigeria.

Radical scholars consistently blame the persistent socio-economic challenges in Nigeria on the structural deficiencies created as a result of the country's colonial experiences.¹ In short, they claim, and rightly so, that colonialism was a system designed not only to exploit, but also meant to keep African countries, indeed, Nigeria in permanent vulnerable position of underdevelopment. Lawrence Ekpebu therefore castigated the colonial powers for their loot of Africa's abundant resources and strongly recommends restitution for the inestimable destruction that colonialism had brought upon the Africans over a period of 350 years.²

1 Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London and Dar-Es-Salam: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1973); Lawrence Ekpebu, *South Africa: The Fall of the Last Imperial Outpost* (Sam Bookman Publishers, 1998); Claude Ake, *The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa* (CODESRIA, 2000).

2 Lawrence Ekpebu, *ibid.*

While acknowledging the considerable and appreciable contributions of these dependency approaches as well as critical analyses of Nigeria's development failures, this paper is also a modest contribution to the debates and analyses in extant literature on obstacles to Nigeria's development project. However, the argument in this paper is that the obstacle to the achievement of development and guarantee of good living standards for Nigerians as well as other people resident in the country is corruption. This perspective is placed within the broad context of the debate about government performance that puts emphasis on social contract theory, which places the responsibilities for the provision of social and economic development in the hands of government. Therefore, this study identifies and analyses corrupt practices of successive administrations and regimes that ruled Nigeria since 1960 to date, as the domestic and contemporary challenge to the achievement of peoples' aspiration and expectation from their government. The paper emphasizes the important role of regulatory institutions of governance especially their oversight function in tackling the raging menace of corruption to the achievement of social and economic development in Nigeria.

This paper challenges the explanations and justifications that locate the persistent socio-economic challenges significantly within the ambit of colonialism and imperialism as well as the unfavorable international political and economic structures. Against the tendency in extant literatures which either underestimate or relegate to the background, issues connected to the character of political regimes that had ruled African countries in general, and Nigeria in particular, the paper contrasts their perspectives with the ignored negative impacts of democratic as well as nondemocratic governance on Nigeria's development strides since independence. It is contended that even though colonial and neo-colonial political as well as economic structures might have had negative impacts on the political and economic sectors of Nigeria, nonetheless, the political elites that have been in-charge of governing the country for about 15 years now have failed largely to commence the process of social and economic transformation in the country.

The discourse about complementarity of relationship between democracy and development in Nigeria's development project has, thus, become both unsatisfactory and unhelpful in the quest for socio-economic development in the country. The arguments made in this paper are analyzed in twofold. First, regardless of whatever optimistic panacea that have been suggested about resolving socio-economic challenges in Nigeria, transforming the character of political regime in the country is central to the understanding and resolution of the socio-economic development problems in the country. Second,

given the fact that the excesses of political leaders through the institutions of governance precipitates and accentuates socio-economic challenges,³ successful panacea for these challenges must necessarily reflect upon the current composition and nature of public regulatory institutions in Nigeria.

The remainder of this paper is split into three parts. The first conceptualizes governance, corruption and socio-economic development, followed by the second part that provides analytical framework of the nexus between governance and socio-economic development. The final section presents the conclusion and recommendation.

2. THEORIZING THE NEXUS BETWEEN GOVERNANCE, CORRUPTION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

The nexus between governance and socio-economic development is such that the latter must grapple with the former in achieving its fundamental objective; to positively affect the living and existential conditions of human beings. There is no better way of furthering this complementary relationship than a focus on the process of organizing human societies for the purpose of catering for the welfare of its members than governance. It is, therefore, not a surprise that in addition to the many treatises on development since the days of Thomas Hobbes, we present and call attention again to the continuing significance of governance and its related issues.

Our analysis in this paper is organized and presented within the rubric of a social science theory called *social contract*. Social contract theory, essentially, enunciates the imperative of surrendering peoples' power over their lives and properties to some people or group of people within the same society, who, in turn, are saddled with the responsibility of providing for, and protecting the people and society at large. Thus, in its relationship with socio-economic development, in the context of man and the society, government will be most concerned with the provision and protection of the most general, abstract and fundamental expectations of the people, and indeed, of the dynamics of political, economic and security needs of the society.

The clamor for democracy in Nigeria is not accidental; numerous academic debates have featured the complex, but yet, important relation-

3 J Milliken, and K Krause, (2003) "State Failure, State Collapse and State Reconstruction: Concepts, Lessons and Strategies" in J. Milliken, ed., *State Failure, Collapse and Reconstruction* (Boston: Blackwell Publishing), pp: 1-24.

ship between democracy and development. Most scholars are optimistic that democracy portends better future for development. Those optimistic about the profits of democratization argue, for instance, that democracy offers better prospects to actualize the developmental aspirations of the citizenry. This optimism is predicated on the assumption that democracy has the best chance to stimulate development.⁴ They therefore push the argument further that development cannot be realized without democracy, just as democracy ultimately cannot be sustained without development.⁵

Several attempts at explaining the inseparable links between democracy and development have also generated perspectives such as the effects of quality of governance on economic growth and development. The contention is that within this broad spectrum, governance (depending on its quality) either hinders or promotes development. According to Ilufoye Ogundiya,⁶ governance surely hinders development where it manifests in corrupt practices; greed and insatiable appetite for resource accumulation. Aliyu and Elijah⁷ emphasize the consequence of corruption that it carts resources away from government capital expenditure and human capital development and ends up in private pockets. This assertion lends credence to the perspectives of Mauro⁸ as well as Tanzi and Dawoodi⁹ who argued that corruption skews the composition of public expenditure away from needed sectors, such as education and health, towards expenditure on private/personal investments. The greed and insatiable quest for resource accumulation thesis displaces the more popular notions of colonial impacts, neo-colonial disempowerment programs and the continued marginalization as captured by the radical model/thesis as the major causes of Nigeria's economic underdevelopment. Instead, corruption constitutes the key factor underlying the continuing underdevelopment debacle and the seemingly intractable socio-economic development in Nigeria. The truism about this assertion is apparent in the spate of corrupt acts of

4 Olson, Mancur (1993) 'Dictatorship, Democracy and Development' *American Political Science Review* vol. 87, no.3 (September) pp: 572-583

5 Ake, Claude (1996) *Democracy and Development in Africa* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution); Diamond, (2005) *op cit*.

6 Ogundiya, Ilufoye Sarafa, "Political Corruption in Nigeria: Theoretical Perspectives and Some Explanations" (2009) 11 (4) *Anthropologist* 281-292

7 Aliyu Shehu Usman Rano and Elijah Akanni Oludele (2008) *Corruption and Economic Growth in Nigeria: 1986-2007*. Available online at <http://www.ub.uni-muenchen.de/12504/>

8 P Mauro, *The Effects of Corruption on Growth, Investment and Government Expenditure: A Cross Country Analysis* (Institute for International Economics 1997).

9 Tanzi, T. and Dawoodi A. "Corruption, Public Investment and Growth", IMF (1997) Working Paper, WP97/139.

the Nigerian political leaders¹⁰ against the background of the theoretical and demonstrated positive relationship between democracy and development as variously enunciated above.

These academic works have not only provided credible theoretical and empirical frameworks for the understanding of the development challenges in Africa, in general, but also of the pandemic and seemingly intractable problem of governance in Nigeria, in particular. However, the point of departure of this literature is the point of arrival of this paper. The contention in this paper is that given that the problem of corruption is inextricably linked to the nature and character of the Nigerian political system on the one hand and the quality of governance on the other hand, these challenges inhibits development strides in Nigeria, therefore for corruption to be ameliorated there must be capable, efficient as well as committed public and private regulatory institutions that could regulate the exercise of political powers and checkmate organs of government agents or individual that acts recklessly in the discharge of their legitimate political responsibilities.

3. CONCEPTUALIZING GOVERNANCE, CORRUPTION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Broadly, governance is concerned with how a state is governed, about the rules and practices according to which governments and state powers as well as authority are exercised.¹¹ Given that the term ‘governance’ means different things to different people, it is useful to use the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) definition of ‘governance’ among the many existing definitions of the concept. UNDP defines governance as “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences”.¹² Particularly important in the UNDP’s definition of governance is that it encompasses not just the state, but the private sector and civil society as well. All the three are viewed as critical to a complete process of ‘good’ gover-

10 There were reported cases of appropriation of public funds by Chairman Nigeria Port Authority, Minister of Aviation, Majority Leader in the House of Representatives, former Speaker of House of Representative, Senators, former Governors and serving Governors, and recently, by the combination of the Presidency and the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to mention but a few cases.

11 M Kjaer, *Governance*. (Cambridge: Polity Press 2004)

12 UNDP, (1997) *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*. Pp 2-3

nance. The role of the state is viewed as that of creating a stable political and legal environment conducive to sustain democracy, while civil society institutions and organizations are viewed as a means of facilitating political and social interaction and mobilizing groups to participate in economic, social and political activities.¹³

Another definition of good governance, perhaps very instructive to the analysis in this paper, is the one offered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. It defines governance as the use of political authority and exercise of control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development.¹⁴ These broad definitions encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled.

Corruption or ‘corrupt’ behavior involves the violation of established rules of governance for personal gain and profit.¹⁵ Seymour Lipset and Gabriel Lenz defined corruption as ‘efforts’ to secure wealth or power, through illegal means, for private gain at the public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit.¹⁶ Victor Dike elaborates these definitions in his analysis of corrupt practices. These practices according to him, include behavior such as bribery (use of reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of a restrictive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public funds or resources for private uses¹⁷. Flowing from the definitions and analyses of corruption and corrupt practices just undertaken above is that the biggest loser from corruption is the society as a whole. It should be stated that systemic corruption undermines state capacity to generate and sustain development programs, while state’s inability to achieve its purpose imperils human security in terms of socio-economic development.

It is widely acknowledged that governance would either have positive or negative impact on the achievement of development. Although there is

13 Ibid, pp 2-3

14 OECD (1995) *Governance in Transition: Public Management Reforms in OECD Countries*. *Policy Paper*. pp. 24.

15 Sen, Amartya (1999) *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

16 Lipset, Seymour Martin and Gabriel Salman Lenz, “Corruption, Culture and Markets”, in *Culture Matters*, Lawrence E. Harrison, and Samuel P. Huntington eds., (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp.112-114

17 V. Dike, “Corruption in Nigeria: A New Paradigm for Effective Control” *African Economic Analysis* (2007) Available at www.AfricaEconomicAnalysis.org

a complimentary relationship between (good) democratic governance and development; they are mutually reinforcing when they develop together. When they develop together, resources are used to advance the public good, public institutions perform their designated roles creditably, social consensus supports and stabilizes the system of government, disputes at different levels are settled amicably, and investment flows into the country, attracted by the low transaction costs associated with transparency, legitimacy and the rule of law.¹⁸ However, all these dependent conditions would be largely absent when governance is bad. Hence, the manifestations of illiberal and corrupt governance would not only breed and spread poverty, for instance, as a result of wasted resources as well as distorted investment, but also portend threats to state and human security. Furthermore, chronic fiscal drain through corrupt practices would drive away crucial resources in terms of direct and indirect foreign investment.

Consequently, in the absence of state financial capacity and will to address public health problems, life threatening, contagious diseases would proliferate and mutate the health conditions of the people, especially the young but useful segment of the population.¹⁹ Also, the lack of financial capacity as a result of illegal diversification of public funds would definitely deprive the state of the much needed infrastructural facilities capable of igniting public and private investment initiatives. The manifestations and consequences of these corrupt practices cannot be neglected or left uncontrolled because of its long-term implications for state, human and most importantly, the current democratic experience in Nigeria. Hence, the need for insightful academic and policy rethink on the causes and panacea for development challenges in Nigeria. The potent threat that corruption poses to human security; in terms of socio-economic development is apparent in the 2013 Transparency International's country report on Nigeria which ranks the country 144 out of the 177 countries assessed for corruption perception index.²⁰

18 USAID (2002) 'Chapter 1: Promoting Democratic Governance' in *Foreign Aid in the National Interest* (Washington, DC: USAID); available at www.usaid.gov/ourwork/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/ug/pdf, accessed February 2007.

19 *ibid*

20 Transparency International country report on corruption perception index: available at www.cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/

4. GOVERNANCE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Nigeria benefited largely from the transformative impact of the global ‘third wave’²¹ of democratization of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Before this period, governance in Nigeria oscillated between one civilian administration at one time and military regime at another period. The military rule that dominated the greater part of Nigeria’s political space as an independent state, gave in to the popular demand for democratic government on May 29, 1999. Nigeria has, therefore, witnessed and experience about 15 years of democratic rule. What has been the impact of democratic governance on social and economic development in Nigeria? Furthermore, what are the implications of the persistence of socio-economic crises for the deepening of democracy in Nigeria?

Analyzing the interface of governance, the character of political regime, socio-economic challenges and the pattern and dimensions of corruption in Nigeria, since 1999, is important for at least five reasons. First, without a long-term, holistic understanding of the causes of socio-economic challenges, the likelihood that this menace will be minimized is slim. Second, the simultaneity of democracy and good governance as well as socio-economic development in Nigeria is conditioned not only by democratic consolidation, but also, by commitment to providing public goods in which political elites should play decisive roles. Third it is imperative to understand the content and context of change as a result of political transition and the continuity associated with governance styles and practices in Nigeria, not the least in order to avoid the vicious cycle of academically sound but inadequate explanation of underdevelopment challenges in Nigeria. Fourth, and at a broader level, the presentation of the analysis in this paper is an important contribution to ongoing debate on corruption as well as how best to transform Nigeria’s economic potentials into the reality of sustainable economic development in the country, especially after the grim failures of previous regimes to initiate and sustain social and economic development. Fifth, and finally, granted that corruption is a peculiar phenomenon in an emerging democratic political order,²² it is important, all the same, to understand the challenge of governance, so as to devise appropriate mechanisms to forestall

21 Huntington, Samuel P. (1991) *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press)

22 United States Institute of Peace (USIP), “Governance Corruption and Conflict” (Washington D.C: USIP, 2010)

escalation of corrupt acts. Understanding the character of political regime and its style of governance in Nigeria, therefore, requires an examination and critical analysis in order to gain insights into how democracy, indeed democratic governance could overcome its challenges so as to be able to achieve and sustain social and economic development.

The development discourse in Nigeria; especially by Nigerian scholars have almost surrendered to the popular and dominating perspective of radical scholars which emphasizes colonialism and its multifaceted implications for broad development project in the country. Whereas considerable attention has been devoted to explaining the causes, and rightly so, of underdevelopment in Africa,²³ there is also a growing understanding of the various remedies for socio-economic development challenges in Nigeria. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that a good understanding of the character²⁴ and style²⁵ of governance is another important aspect of the explanation for underdevelopment. The quest for and struggle by Nigerians for democratic government are conceived as means to two important ends.²⁶ That is, one that is aimed not only at doing away with repressive and autocratic governments, but also demands for government with a material value to improve the living standards of the people. Expectedly, then, tackling the myriad development challenges provoked by long years of autocratic military regimes and sustained by the current political dispensation in the country, has become one of the expectations of Nigerians.²⁷

However, the characters of emerging political regimes in sub-Saharan African countries,²⁸ especially in Nigeria as well as their styles of governance, have, to say the least, hampered the achievement of socio-economic development aspirations of Nigerians. Corrupt practices²⁹ and its attendant conse-

23 Rodney, (1973) op cit; Ake, (2000) op cit

24 Democratic governance, although with the theoretical separation of powers, but limited in operations by empirical partisan, ethno-religious allegiance and personal benefit restrictions.

25 Governments' economic and financial recklessness are not appropriately sanctioned because the anti-corruption institutions and agencies are weak, restricted and constrained by the nature of appointment of their leaders.

26 Wiseman, John (1996) *The Struggle for Democracy* (Aldershot: Avebury)

27 Ojo, O. Patrick (2005) *An Assessment of the Clinton Administration's Foreign Policy Towards Nigeria* (An Unpublished M.Sc Thesis).

28 Diamond, (2002) op cit and van de Walle, (2002) op cit; Ottaway, Marina (2003) *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace)

29 David Sebudubudu, 'Issues and Challenges in Democratic Governance in Africa: The Case of Botswana' Paper presented at the Conference on "Governance Reform: What is the Record? Perspective from the South and North on Governance, Policy Space and Democratic Processes, The University of Quebec, Montreal, Canada. March 24-28 2010.

quences are particularly weighing preponderantly against the establishment of social infrastructural amenities and national political building-blocks that could ignite, generate, propel as well as sustain broad development in Nigeria. For instance, Agara³⁰ posits that the collaboration between the corrupt political leaders and the corrupt-laden bureaucratic process in all Third World countries, especially in Nigeria has contributed immensely to the content and context of governance in the regions. Significantly, this governance challenge poses danger to human security, precisely in terms of the indices that could improve the living standards of the people. Furthermore, the concern that the persistent socio-economic challenges could ignite civil protests and violent demonstrations against the government continues to create concern across Nigeria. Beyond these concerns is the potential threat that socio-economic challenges poses to democracy in Nigeria, in terms of the consequences for democratic consolidation which could arise as a result of peoples' reaction to social and economic frustration in the country. To sum it up, the apparent fear that the concerns and potent threats could reverse the modest gains achieved on democratic development so far is becoming real.

Furthermore, another observable trend in the democracy-development literature is the tendency to either underestimate or relegate to the background issues connected to the character of political regimes, notably power elites even when it is realized that new political regimes in Africa, indeed in Nigeria, are essentially concerned about personalization of power and state resources by every available means.³¹ Conversely, historical colonial experience, autocratic rule, political instability, the monoculture nature of the national economy, and the persistent lack of commitment to focused development strategies on the part of the political elites are also part of the causes of Nigeria's current status as an underdeveloped country. The radical disconnection of the Nigerian economy from neo-liberal international economic structures and financial institutions and market forces, economic diversification, and even direct distribution of resource funds to the general population are prescribed as the routes to rescuing Nigeria from its seemingly vicious cycle of underdevelopment. Although this growing tide of policy and academic prescriptions are important for the social and economic progress in a country that is emerging

30 Babatunde Agara, "Bureaucratic Corruption and Corruption of Bureaucratic Process" in Hassan A. Saliu, Jacob F. Olorunfemi, Usman Lateef and Samuel B. Oludoyi eds., *Democracy and Development in Nigeria Conceptual Issues and Democratic Practice* (Lagos: Concept Publications 2006), pp.231-257

31 Richard Joseph, "Institution-Building and Development in Africa" (2005) 6 *Global Dialogue* 3-4.

form authoritarian, nondemocratic political experience, it however represents far less causes; as it demonstrate a narrow perspective as well as prescribes inadequate solutions to the current development challenges in Nigeria.

Theoretically, democratic government represents a rare window of opportunity to rebuild failing institutions of governance and state-building as well as to proffer remedy to the monumental failures of the past regimes. Empirically however, democratic governance should present a platform to plant liberal democratic values or institutional mechanisms capable regulating governance processes and to minimize the excesses of political elites. The existence of structurally weak regulatory institutions that lack the political will, in the governance of a country like Nigeria where it has been very difficult to translate the national economic potentials to realistic sustainable development, raises more troubling questions that ignites concerns. For instance, it is pertinent to ask why democratic government in Nigeria has not been able to perform as expected; given the popular perspective that there is a complementary relationship between democracy and development?. The inability to perform adequately emanates from the apparent structural deficiencies in governance as well as the ineffective regulatory institutions that are weak in their operational mechanisms and fraught with controversies over the discharge of their responsibilities.

For instance, there is the constitutional deficiency in the 1999 constitution of the Nigeria state over whose responsibility it is to investigate and prosecute economic and financial crimes suspect(s). This constitutional lacuna creates a lot of hindrances not only for the regulatory institutions like the National Assembly, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), but also inhibits the prosecution process through delays and perhaps eventual release of the suspects without adequate reward for their financial and economic lawlessness. Once the National Assembly had taken over the investigation of an alleged corrupt practice, the EFCC would have to wait for the outcome of the legislative enquiries before taken any further step to addressing the graft issue. In this instance, we have witnessed a situation whereby Nigerians had to wait endlessly to hear the outcome of the whole scenario; which at times might end up in cover-up and/or controversial judgment.³² Beyond this constitutional impediment, the appointment of the head

32 The cases involving former Speaker of the House of Representatives in Nigeria (Hon Dimeji Bankole) and the former House Leader who is still a member of the current House of Representatives in Nigeria (Hon Faruk Lawan) readily comes to mind here.

of these anti-corruption agencies as well as the election of those of the Upper and Lower legislative chambers of parliament in Nigeria are done and influenced respectively by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The implications of these formal and informal responsibilities of the Nigerian President are that: the leaders of the respective anti-corruption agencies and bodies are subject to the whims and manipulations of Mr. President in the discharge of their constitutional responsibilities. This situation accounted for the allegations against the EFCC's performance under the former President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration that the Ribadu-led anti-corruption agency was selective in its investigation and prosecution of suspected financial and economic fraud in the country.

The importance of regulatory institutions, especially their oversight functions, has clearly become a neglected area in the development discourse in Nigeria against the background that democratic governance is the key link between national development and the achievement of good living standards of the citizens. However, the evident gaps between the fulfillment of peoples' expectations and the failure of the Nigerian government to deliver on its pre-election promises could be located fundamentally in the character of the political administration as well as its governance styles (corrupt practices).

The failure of anti-corruption agencies to either prevent financial and economic theft or recover the huge monetary resources being stolen in Nigeria yearly³³ alludes to the imaginable impact of corruption on the achievement of socio-economic goods of governance in the country. Such huge monetary resources could have been invested in social and economic infrastructure which would definitely translate to socio-economic well-being of the citizenry. This fundamental assertion of 'governance challenge' to Nigeria's development issues is a recurrent discourse in extant literature. The panacea for this challenge is, however, not been emphasized like the 'challenge'. Whereas, corruption and its attendant negative impacts on Nigeria's social, political, and economic sectors has been identified as the bane of the country's development strides, academic and policy debate continues to emphasize the internal and external factors responsible for Nigeria's underdevelopment and how best the

33 Ribadu, Nuhu (2007) "Nigeria's Struggle with Corruption" Paper presented to the Congressional House Committee on International Development (Washington, DC: Congressional Briefing); Fatokun, A. Samuel (2012) "Corruption and the Crisis of Development in Nigeria: The Way Forward" *African Journal of Stability and Development*, vol. 6, no. 2 (July), pp 84-110; Owagbemi, Olusola Gabriel (2012) "Anti-Graft Policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria: The Case of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)" *African Journal of Stability and Development*, vol. 6, no. 2 (July), pp. 111-134.

country could overcome the challenge of 'corruption',³⁴ there is no emphasis on the need to strengthen the regulatory mechanisms and institutions in order to checkmate the economic and financial recklessness.

Attempts had been made to checkmate the growth and spread of the social enigma called 'corruption' in Nigeria. The initial constitutional attempt is the established regulatory (oversight) responsibilities of the legislative arm of government (the National and State Assemblies). The recent attempts are evident in the establishment of anti-graft commissions like the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

The initial momentum and modest achievements in the anti-corruption crusade is gradually giving way to apathy and partial commitment, hence, the decline in the momentum and progress made so far in the fight against corruption. This situation is causing concern; most importantly because of the unacceptable relenting trend in the fight against financial and economic graft activities that hinders the achievement of socio-economic development. The declining trends and the apparent ineffectiveness of all the anti-corruption agencies mentioned above are evident in the prevailing proportion of impunity with which economic and financial transgressions in Nigeria manifests; noting with nostalgia how some proven cases of financial misconducts were rewarded with paltry award of monetary fines as punishment for appropriating millions of dollars of state resources. This trend does not only encourage corruption, but also fail to portray corrupt acts as serious crime against the state as well as anti-development programs.

The ineffectiveness of State and National Assemblies to discharge of their constitutional regulatory responsibilities, especially their oversight functions as well as the demonstrated slow, complicated and politically-influenced legal trials of suspects of economic and financial misconducts, is encouraging the spate of unchecked corruption in Nigeria. For instance, the records of achievements of these anti-graft commissions are characterized by instances such as selective investigation and prosecution of suspected violators of economic and financial rules, as well as prolonged and complicated

34 Enamiroro Patrick Oghuvbu, "Education Poverty and Development in Nigeria: The Way Forward in the 21st Century", (2007) 14 (1) *Journal of Social Science* pp. 19-24; Daniel Egieba Abiboa and Benjamin Maiangwa, "Corruption in the Underdevelopment of the Niger Delta in Nigeria", (2012) 5 (8) *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 108-132; Kalejaye, Peter O. and Nurudeen Alliyu, "Ethnic Politics and Social Conflicts: Factors in Nigeria's Underdevelopment", (2013) 16 (27) *The Journal of International Social Research* 251-262; Benjamin C. D. Diara and Nkechinyere G. Onah "Corruption and Nigeria's Underdevelopment: a Religious Approach", (2014) 4(4) *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*.

investigation and trials of suspects of governance misconduct. Moreover, the controversies surrounding the interrogation, detention and legal prosecution of prominent political elites in Nigeria also speaks volumes about the capability, effectiveness and credibility of the anti-corruption commissions as well as the judicial system that are supposed to cooperate with these anti-graft agencies in the anti-corruption crusade in the country. In sum, the implications of the character, performance and challenges facing anti-corruption agencies are apparent not only for socio-economic development, in particular, but also, for the Nigerian development project in general. How then can Nigeria ensure good governance in order to promote and sustain socio-economic development in the country?

It is evident from the definitions and empirical manifestations of corruption that it is the major bane of Nigeria's development debacle since independence in 1960. The obvious best solution to this anti-development phenomenon should not stop at identification of the challenge, but must also proceed to nipping the menace in the bud. In this regard, conscious, committed and proactive measures must be put in place to checkmate governance challenges in Nigeria. This is very important because bad governance is the conveying mechanism that ignites and propels corruption, which, in turn, carts away resources from the national covers as well as diverts the same valuable, useful and scarce resources to personal coffers for selfish motives. The anti-corruption policies and anti-graft agencies in Nigeria today had gathered steam (in their constitution and structures) but have not been able to checkmate corrupt practices effectively because of the above mentioned challenges that are inherent in the structure and performance of anti-corruption agencies.

The renewed vision of commitment to the development of regulatory institutions capable of checkmating governance recklessness in one urgent panacea needed to resolve the current governance challenge: corruption; that plagues development in Nigeria. The disconnection between democracy (governance) and achievement of socio-economic development in the country is the determination to set up capable and effective regulatory institutions that could adequately checkmate the persistent corruption in the business of governing Nigeria. Reconnecting this important missing link remains one credible but largely ignored issue in the current effort to make the desired transition to good and sustainable governance as well as guarantee the achievement of socio-economic development a reality in Nigeria.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has established that there is a dialectical link between governance styles and the achievement of socio-economic development in Nigeria. The impact of the latter on the former is largely dependent on the conducts within the institutions of governance; that either weakens or strengthens state capacity to realizing its vision and mission. Corruption is arguably central to the problem of socio-economic development in Nigeria to the extent that its prevalence distorts growth and economic prosperity in the country, and undermines the normal functioning of institutions of governance that could promote social and economic development.

Therefore, this paper recommends that the problem of corruption must be addressed by checkmating the excesses of and enforcing the legal restraints on the authority of government official as well as increase the principle of accountability in governance. Nigeria cannot effectively control the menace of corruption in the nation by merely instituting public panels and establishing anticorruption commissions and/or agencies. Considering the many-sided nature of corruption, there is the need to focus the war against governance styles which I consider as the holistic anti-graft effort against every dimension of corruption in Nigeria. Democratic government must imbibed and practice the tenets as well as the virtues of democratic governance as the ultimate solution to behavioral change in governance styles, institutional transformation of the anti-graft agencies that could reduce corruption in Nigeria.

Furthermore, political leadership must refocus, reemphasize and pursue with vigor the vision as well as the mission of democratic governance which incidentally tallies with the aspiration for and the struggle by Nigerians for democracy in the country. These bold steps are summed up in what I call 'political will' and 'determination'. Political will and determination are required because no corrupt leader can wage an effective war against corruption. If the menace of corruption is tamed, it is only then that the political and economic excesses of apparatuses of governance can be checkmated which could translate to improved governance. Good governance could, in turn, would translate to improved formulation and implementation of sound micro and macro economic policies. These are building blocks of improved political and economic performance of any economy, indeed, socio-economic development. The failure to take all of these measures leaves the Nigerian society highly vulnerable to human security stresses. As such,

there is an urgent need for empirically grounded transformation agenda in Nigeria, so as to formulate and implement policies that would stimulate and create the much desired socio-economic progress, and indeed, contrast contemporary realities in the country where the so-called ‘transformation agenda’ is more real in rhetoric than reality.