

Combating High-Profile Corruption in Transitional¹ Societies: Overview of Experiences from Some African Countries

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KEYWORDS Corruption. Transition. Development. Transparency. Neo-colonial Economy

ABSTRACT The Transition of African societies from traditional to modernity has presented some peculiar problems. One of such problems is corruption. Corruption has been the bane of African socio-economic and political development. Against this background most Africa countries have set up anti-corruption agencies to tackle this cankerworm. This paper examines the experiences of some African countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Malawi and Kenya in their fight against high-profile corruption and argued that these countries have achieved varying degrees of successes in this regard. Situating high-profile corruption within the context of neo-colonial economy theoretical framework, the paper argued that this form of corruption is a carry over from colonial experience as a result of quest by emerging economies of Africa to develop in line with the western capitalism thereby pressuring individuals and groups who occupied various political positions to accumulate material wealth. The paper therefore concludes by arguing that the fight against corruption can be won if the institutions and agencies created for this purpose are made non-political, independent, deepened and strengthened by relevant legislations by the various African countries.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a worldwide phenomenon. In fact corruption has been a global scourge ever since civilization began (Clinnard and Abbot 1973). Simply defined by Transparency International and the World Bank (Fakoya and Lalude 2001) as the abuse of public office for private gains, it has permeated the socio-economic and political fabric the world over. What may constitute corruption may vary from one group to another and from culture to another (Okafor 2005; Odimuko 2006). As a result it goes by different names such as *routine bribery, backsheed, guando, palm greasing, sorting, tips, payoff, graft, kickback, egunje*, etc. However, whatever name it goes by, the effects are more or less the same – stunting socio-economic process of development (Obi-Okogbuo 2000; Osu 2005).

In Africa with forces of globalisation sweeping across the continent, the issue of corruption is so common that the concept has attracted a lot of academic and intellectual discourses. Some African countries like Nigeria, Cameroon, etc have been severally ranked by the Transparency International, a non-governmental organization, one of the most corrupt nations of the world. High-profile corruption in Africa permeates both public and private lives. Interest in the concept becomes rekindled in academic and intellectual discourse following various efforts made by var-

ious African governments to checkmate this cankerworm. For instance, in Nigeria erstwhile President Olusegun Obasanjo's indictment of legislative arm of government and sacking of some cabinet ministers for corrupt practices in 2004 rekindled the flagging and waning interest in the subject matter of high-profile corruption in Nigeria and Africa as a whole (Aiyetan and Yusuf 2007).

At his inaugural speech in 1999 as a newly elected civilian government, erstwhile President Obasanjo vowed to tackle corruption. To this end, the government established two agencies - Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offense Commission, (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crime Commission, (EFCC) to achieving the purpose.

This paper is an attempt to contribute to on going intellectual discourse on the socio-economic and political implications of high-profile corruption, by focusing exclusively on the efforts made by some selected African countries in fight this menace.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF CORRUPTION

Corruption has been a subject of focus not only by the social scientists but also by leading creative writers, novelists, poets, and many others. One can therefore assume that the range of

activities conventionally viewed as acts of corruption cover a wider range of spectrum of human conducts.

The concept has attracted quite a number of definitions depending on the academic and intellectual orientation of the one defining the concept. Onigu Otite (cited in Agaga 1999: 10) defined corruption as “the perversion of integrity or affairs through bribery, favour, or moral depravity...societal impurity”. He argued that a country becomes more corrupt as she enters a crucial phase of modernisation of which industrialisation and democratisation are very important components. From the above definition, one can note that corruption causes debasement of human integrity. It is a social phenomenon with disruptive effects and negative consequences.

Odekunle (1983: 6) asserted that: *corruption is the asking, giving or taking of fees, gifts, or favour in perversion or the performance of an illegitimate task, hoarding, collusive price fixing, smuggling, transfer pricing, inflation of prices, election rigging, and illegal arrests for harassment or intimidation purposes, conversion of other person's money or property to direct or indirect personal use.*

Odekunle's definition (1983) brings to light the extent to which corrupt practices are indulged and perpetrated. It further indicates the degree at which aiding and abetting could breed and nurture corruption. Moreover, Okafor (2005: 22) defines corruption as “the use of power for profit, preferment, or prestige, or for the benefit of group or class in way that constitutes a breach of law or of high moral conduct”. Also, corruption has been defined as behaviours, which deviate from the formal rules of conduct governing

the action of somebody in position of authority because of private-regarding motives such as wealth, power or status (Fakoya and Lalude 2001).

From all these definitions enunciated above, one can deduce that acts of corruption include; bribery, kickbacks, nepotism, sexual inducement, sorting, extortion, patronage, influence peddling, fraud, embezzlement, misappropriation etc. Scholars have attempted to categorise these corrupt acts into different types. These are; *political corruption, economic corruption, bureaucratic corruption, judicial corruption and moral and religious corruption* (Otite 1983; Olopoeina 1998; Ajayi 2001; Okafor 2005). By high-profile corruption, this author meant corrupt practices undertaken and perpetuated by African politicians, policy makers, bureaucrats and economic elites.

Corruption in transitional continent of Africa is such a complex phenomenon in that it takes two to create corrupt act: i.e. a *giver* and a *receiver*. It is by no means limited to Africa. However, in most instances in international arena, attention has always been focused on the *receiving* countries with little or not attention paid to *giving* countries. The recent publication by the Transparency International showed that an African country is not the worst of bribe payers as indicated on the table 1.

The table above depicts a survey of about 11,000 businesses people in 125 countries carried out World Economic Forum in 2006. A score of 10 indicates a perception of no corruption, while zero means corruption seen as rampant. Switzerland with 7.81 points is ranked the major exporter of goods and services whose compa-

Table 1: Bribe Payers' Index 2006

Rank	Country/Territory	Average score (0-10)	Rank	Country/Territory	Average score (0 - 10)
1	Switzerland	7.81	16	Portugal	6.47
2	Sweden	7.62	17	Mexico	6.45
3	Australia	7.59	18	Hong Kong	6.01
4	Austria	7.50	19	Israel	6.01
5	Canada	7.46	20	Italy	5.94
6	UK	7.39	21	South Korea	5.83
7	Germany	7.34	22	Saudi Arabia	5.75
8	Netherlands	7.28	23	Brazil	5.65
9	Belgium	7.22	24	South Africa	5.61
10	US	7.22	25	Malaysia	5.59
11	Japan	7.10	26	Taiwan	5.41
12	Singapore	6.78	27	Turkey	5.23
13	Spain	6.63	28	Russia	5.16
14	UAE	6.62	29	China	4.94
15	France	6.50	30	India	4.62

Sources: Transparency International Report on Bribe Payer's Index (Adeyeye, 2006).

nies are least likely to pay bribes in foreign countries. She is followed by Sweden, Australia, Austria and Canada in that order. Two world's leading anti-corruption advocates, the United Kingdom and the United States were numbers 6 and 10 respectively. From the table, India multinational companies operating outside are ranked the most likely to give bribes to secure major contracts in foreign countries (Adeyeye 2006).

AFRICAN EXPERIENCES IN COMBATING HIGH-PROFILE CORRUPTION

In Nigeria the war against corruption especially high-profile ones has been so vigorous since the return of the country to civilian rule in 1999. With civilian government anti-corruption drive, a number of highly placed government officials, politicians and former officials had been handcuffed and brought to trial to answer corruption charges.

First to be humiliated in this manner was Tafa Balogun, Nigeria's former Inspector-General of Police (IGP) who on November 22, 2005, was jailed for six months for stealing over N13b (about \$10m) of police funds. Next in line was erstwhile Governor D.S.P. Alamiyeseigha of oil-rich Bayelsa State in the heart of the Niger Delta. Arrested by British police on September 13, 2005, after a million pounds were found in his London home, Alamiyeseigha jumped bail and returned to Nigeria but was soon impeached by the state's lawmakers. His trial dragged and was eventually jailed for two on July 26th 2007. Another prominent political figure to be arrested was Prince Abubakar Audu, erstwhile governor of north-central Kogi State. The year 2006 ended on bad note for the loquacious politician, with his ambition to return to power in 2007 blocked by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) following his indictment, arrest and arraignment in chains before a high court in Lokoja, the state capital, on December 1, 2006. Though granted bail, Audu, who governed Kogi from May 29, 1999 to May 29, 2003, faced an uphill task extricating himself from an 80-count charge of stealing and money laundering (Ishiekwe 2006; Umunna 2007). Several other erstwhile governors whole lost immunities of May 27, 2007 had been put on trial for corruption charges (Soniya, Amokeodo and Babalola 2007).

Besides these, several other heavyweights – politician, other public office holders and busi-

nessmen – have been entrapped and put on trial. Some few years ago no one would have thought and believed any of this was possible in a country known as one of the most corrupt in the world. The story, however, changed with the creation of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) on April 12, 2003. The Commission, which derives its legal muscle from the EFCC Establishment Act of 2004, has the responsibility to combat various economic and financial crimes such as banking fraud, money laundering, and advance fee fraud (known locally as *419* after the relevant section of the Nigerian Criminal Code). Whether the crime was committed in the distant past or present is not important. The EFCC has the power to prosecute directly without going through the Attorney General's office (Nwankwo et al. 2007; Oyedele 2007).

Since its establishment, the Commission has made more than 2000 arrests and obtained over 100 convictions. It has recovered several houses, land, luxury cars, airplanes, and oil tankers, as well as other assets and cash worth billions of US dollars. It is at present pursuing over 400 criminal cases in various criminal courts in Nigeria (Ribadu 2006). That the EFCC, which boasts of less than a thousand personnel, has been able to accomplish so much in so short a time speaks volumes of the passions which its pioneer executive chairman, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu*, Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG), brings to his job (Nwankwo et al. 2007).

Advance fee fraudsters, known locally as *419ers*, were the first to taste the wrath of the EFCC. Prior to the coming of the Commission, this group of criminals, who were supposed to be tackled by the Special Fraud Unit of the Nigeria Police, operated brazenly. Each time they were arrested, they soon regained their freedom and returned to their business. A typical Nigerian *419er* either makes bogus business proposal or, in the case of most of them who target foreigners, seek assistance to transfer to the would-be victim's account abroad, large sums of money supposedly overpaid by the Nigerian government on some phoney contracts. The would-be victim is promised heavy cut of the booty, only to be soon asked to pay some money in advance to take care of things like taxes, insurance, legal fees, handling fees and bribes. The *419er* severs all contacts after milking his victim and goes in search of another (Okafor 2005; Nwankwo 2007).

A group of Nigerian *419ers* hold the record

of pulling off the biggest scam in the world. But their cup became full with the arrival of EFCC. After months in detention, Mrs Amaka Anajemba, one of the accused persons on July 15, 2005 pleaded guilty to crimes of 419 and money laundry. She was subsequently jailed two and half years by high court in Lagos, southwest Nigeria. In addition, she was ordered to return \$48.5 million to *Banco Noroeste* of Brazil which was defrauded of a total \$242m by an international syndicate of 419ers that included Mrs Anajemba's husband, Okechukwu, and Emmanuel Nwude, a former director of a leading Nigerian bank. On their part, Nwude and another accomplice, Nzeribe Okoli – both of whom also confessed to the crime – were sentenced to various terms in prisons. They were also made to forfeit all their tangible assets, in addition to Nwude refunding over \$110m and paying \$10m as fine (Umunna 2007).

To further boost its operations, the Commission put in place wide-ranging measures to combat 419, among them monitoring activities at cyber cafes in Nigeria, and signing memoranda of understanding with Microsoft to tackle cyber crimes. It has also subscribed to the London Action Plan on spam and is presently working with the other 26 member countries to fight cross border spam (Koni 2007).

In its determination to rid Nigeria of scams, the EFCC contemplated probing some churches in a bid to determine whether or not they are involved in money laundering and other economically questionable activities. New generation churches preaching prosperity and miracles are mushrooming in Nigeria, with the deepening poverty among their followers raising doubts as to true sources of their stupendous wealth (Uba-kanwa 2007). Latest data quoted by erstwhile President Obasanjo showed that 60 million Nigerians, nearly all of the country's 140 million people, still wallow in poverty. This is against 15 percent at independence from British rule on October 1, 1960 (Ishiekwe 2006; Umunna 2007).

Paradoxically, Nigeria is resource-rich and the world's sixth largest oil producer. Since the return of the country to civilian rule in 1999, there had been high global oil prices, the country raked in billions of dollars every year from crude oil sales, not counting revenue from solid minerals and other sundry sources. The EFCC attributed the poverty situation of most Nigerians to poor governance as a result of corruption, economic

and financial crimes. Supporting this position, the World Bank figures indicated that about \$300 billion of Nigeria's oil wealth has been stolen in the last four decades by the country's leaders, who also looted \$500 billion donor's assistance from western countries to Nigeria since independence (Okafor 2005; Osu 2005).

The cases of politicians have been the major obstacle to the fight towards eradicating high-profile corruption in Nigeria. Some of these politicians occupying the highest position in government at both federal and state levels enjoy immunity from prosecution while in office. The 1999 Constitution which never envisaged the present level of high-profile corruption by some elected public officers adequately protects the President, Vice President, Governors and Deputy Governors (Aiyetan and Yusuf 2007; Oyedele 2007). Severally the Commission had indicted many of Nigeria's 36 state governors, but could not do much to bring them to justice due to the immunity guaranteed them by section 308(1) of the constitution. However, since May 29, 2007 when most of them lost their immunity, the Commission had put some of them on trail for corruption charges¹ (Aiyetan 2007; Eghagha and Ndujiche 2007; Iriekpen and Muraina 2007; Mojeed et al. 2007).

Frustrated by this immunity clause in the constitution, midway in 2006, the Commission's boss lost his patience with many politicians. To find a way round the immunity obstacle, he would simply move against the (usually compromised) lawmakers of a state whose governor had a very bad case. Driven by the urge for self-preservation, the legislators would usually cooperate and impeach the governor, while those of them who refused to support the process were detained irrespective of court orders for their release. The strategy worked well in the south-west state of Ekiti, whose erstwhile governor, Ayo Fayose, was impeached in October 16, 2006 and in north-central Plateau State, whose Joshua Dariye was ousted November 13, 2006. However, the Commission's joy was incomplete, as both Fayose and Dariye successfully slipped away to escape arrest (Nwankwo et al. 2007). For Ribadu and his Commission, the EFCC, the limited success recorded in Ekiti and Plateau came at great cost to their reputation. There have been outcries including newspaper editorial, opinions, against the use of illegitimate means to get legislators to

impeach out-of-favour governors (Ketefe and Mojeed 2007).

The harshest criticism came from the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), of which Ribadu is a member. Shortly before he quit office at the expiration of his tenure, erstwhile NBA president Lanke Odogiyian, demanded Ribadu's sack as a punishment for his contempt for the law. Odogiyian, who said he had prepared five suits in foreign courts for human rights violation against the EFCC leadership, argued:

The commission has been sectional and selective in fighting corruption. While it turns a blind eye to the brazen graft and looting of public funds by some people in government it has been hounding those known as political and business opponents of the government in power. The commission operates as if it is above the law, arresting and detaining people for weeks or months without charging them with any offence in court. It disregards court injunctions not to arrest and treats with disdain court orders to release those detained. The fact that the person at the helm of affairs at EFCC is a lawyer and that EFCC has a legal department makes this assault on the legal profession unacceptable and unpardonable (Umunna 2007: 14).

Giving EFCC a hard knock and carpeting it for its impartiality in handling corruption cases, Koni (2007: 15) argued that:

...the EFCC has not been sincere and indeed has failed Nigerians as regards the alleged mismanagement about N83 billion in the Nigerian Ports Authority under the chairmanship of Olabode George....The EFCC boss said that George was a part-time chairman and was thus not fully involved in the internal running of the NPA affair...the most embarrassing of them all is the EFCC advisory list of alleged corrupt politicians that interestingly, led to the latest attempt to amend the EFCC act. Many are still wondering aloud why a man like...Adebayo Alao-Akala, who was literally roasted in the public(at the University of Ibadan) the other day by Ribadu, was given a clean bill of health by the EFCC to contest the governorship seat of Oyo State. His name was conspicuously missing from the EFCC list which surprisingly contained names of some politicians with no proven cases of corruption.

One case which gave Ribadu migraine was the one involving erstwhile Vice-President Atiku

Abubakar, who since August 2005 has been exchanging allegations of corruption with erstwhile President Obasanjo. While it took less than one month to investigate and indict Atiku over the management of the Petroleum Development Trust Fund (PTDF), the Commission was reluctant to equally probe Obasanjo, his family members and his loyalists. Obasanjo was accused of exploiting his position as President to expand his business empire. His company, Obasanjo Holding Ltd., which was widely believed to have fallen on hard times before he assumed power after winning the 1999 elections, has since then been expanding at lightning speed. The company has intermittently grappled with scandals. In the past six months, it has been embroiled in scandals twice (Adegbamigbe, 2007). The leaking of information on its massive investment in *Trans Corp*, a mega firm inspired by Obasanjo, promoted by his corporate friends and favoured by his administration, to the media, forced it to hurriedly divest, although this was contested by opponents of Obasanjo. Then came the disclosure in November 2006 that the President's favourite aide, Andy Uba, bought tractors for Obasanjo Farms from the \$170,000 which he allegedly smuggled into the US in a presidential jet when he traveled with Obasanjo to New York. Gbenga, one of the President's sons, had earlier been accused of lodging about \$22m in some US banks (Ajayi 2007; Ketefe and Mojeed 2007).

In yet another scandal, Senator Nzeribe once announced that the Presidency gave him N300M (about \$2.2m) to bribe his colleagues so as to prevent Obasanjo's impeachment during his first term which ran from May 29 1999 to May 29 2003. Some other prominent cases which Nigerians are still waiting for the EFCC to investigate include the N400M (about \$3m) Defence ministry scam involving its former permanent secretary, Julius Mankanjuola (said to be Obasanjo's relation); the N214m(about \$1.6m) National Identity Card scam involving some leaders of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP); the N300m (about \$2.2) for road construction allegedly mismanaged by PDP chieftain Tony Anenih while serving as works minister; and the N54b (about \$ 406m) scandal at the Nigeria Ports Authority when Bode George, a PDP stalwart, was its chairman as well numerous contracts hurriedly awarded at the twilight of his administration including the sale of two refineries to his business associates (Okafor 2005; Ekenna 2007; Oyedele 2007).

Against this backdrop, many Nigerians may attach little importance to the Commission's boast that "whatever or whatsoever is involved (in corrupt practices), when caught he will be brought to justice, even the President". No doubt most Nigerians are waiting to see if the commission will eventually move against Obasanjo and his Vice who lost their immunities on vacating office on May 29, 2007.

The failure to confront President Obasanjo notwithstanding, EFCC has remains quite popular among Nigerians. Such sentiment was echoed internationally, with no less a person than erstwhile World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz who described Ribadu as a remarkable young man who has put his life on the line in the fight to rid Nigeria of corruption (Ketefe and Mojeed 2007).

Thanks chiefly to the Commission, Nigeria has made a giant leap on the annual corruption perception index (CPI) compiled by Transparency International. The latest ranking released on November 6, 2006 saw the country leapfrogging from the sixth position to the 18th on the list of 163 countries surveyed. Nigeria was traditionally ranked among the three most corrupt countries in the world before the EFCC started to make impact. Going by the new ranking, at least seven African nations, namely *Guinea* (4th), *Sudan* (5th), *Democratic Republic of Congo* (6th), *Chad* (7th), *Equatorial Guinea* (10th), *Ivory Coast* (11th), and *Sierra Leone* (16th) are now more corrupt than Nigeria (Umunna 2007). From all indications Nigeria under the current leadership of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua may be changing for the better. Infact, if the current momentum as demonstrated by the Commission by putting some erstwhile governors on trail for corruption charges is maintained and deepened, the progress made in the fight against corruption could become irreversible.

For the Commission, it requires monumental courage and sacrifice to get this far. Apart from constitutional barriers; there is also the pressure from interested parties in high-profile cases. Usually the moment a case is entered against some important personalities in the society, they rush to top government officials, traditional rulers and other eminent people, requesting them to intervene on their behalf. Many of the alleged criminals also offer bribes to EFCC officers, and when these are rejected resort to blackmail by claiming that they are being persecuted due to

their ethnic, tribal or religious background (Ishiekwe, 2006). When none of that works, the EFCC officers have to contend with death threats. However, because of its steadfastness and the doggedness of its chairman, in the war against economic and financial crimes, and for the positive impact the commission in Nigeria as well as the country's image, the commission has won a lot of recognition and international awards (Nwankwo et al. 2007).

The Commission also aims to take the war against economic and financial crimes beyond the borders of Nigeria, starting with the West African sub-region. The Commission has vowed to deal a fatal blow to the cyber crime networks operating from Nigeria and the West African sub-region. This is based on the facts that most 419 kingpins who have relocated away from Nigeria because of the activities of EFCC to other west African countries are laundering their illicitly gotten wealth by dumping goods in the west African markets, thereby killing local industries and exacerbating the level of unemployment. The estimated population of 210 million people in the sub region will be a veritable market for money launderers if allowed to operate in the sub-region (Odimuko 2006).

The Commission appeared to have succeeded because it could count on the active backing of erstwhile Obasanjo's administration and hopefully may do more if it secures the backing of the current and sitting President, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. Since 2004 Obasanjo's administration had sustained its reform programme aimed to promote accountability, probity, transparency and due process. Obasanjo, who perceived corruption as "the single most violent impediment to development", and was desperate to leave a lasting legacy, had earlier in the life of his administration established the Independent Corrupt Practices (and other related offences) Commission (ICPC), and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) which concentrate on curbing bribery and corruption in the civil/ public service and private sector respectively committed from year 2000. The two anti-corruption agencies have made significant impact of war against corruption both in public and private sectors since their establishment as shown on table 2.

It pertinent to note that Nigeria has entered into bilateral agreements, as well as signed and ratified international instruments, including the *UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime* (2000) and the *Convention against Corruption* (2003). When the erstwhile British

Table 2: Performance of Index of ICPC and EFCC

<i>Institution</i>	<i>ICPC(As at July 2005)</i>	<i>EFCC(As at Oct. 2006)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Number of petitions received	1846	5400	7246
Estimated value of Assets recovered	0	\$5billion	\$5billion
Number of investigations	80	550	6300
Number of pursuits	49	+300	349
Number of persons	2	92	94
Staff Strength	271	+800	1071

Source: Ribadu (2006).

Prime Minister Tony Blair launched the Extractive Industries for Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2003, Nigeria was the first countries to sign on and quickly began implementation through the establishment of the national stake holders working group in February 2004. The EITI attempts to increase transparency and hold government and private companies accountable in oil, gas, and mining industries by obtaining verification of government revenues and company expenditure. Apart from Nigeria, other African countries such as Chad, Angola, and Ghana, have since signed for the EITI (Umunna 2007).

Corruption has stunted, not only Nigeria's development but that of the entire African continent. According to Wolfowitz, the erstwhile World Bank boss, "20 years ago there were about 150million Africans living below poverty line, but today, the figure have doubled to about 300million, yet the continent has seen about five hundred billion dollars oil wealth that has not helped the people". In 2005, the majority of African countries (30 out of the 44) were placed in the "rampant corruption" level with a score of less than three on the global corruption chart. Botswana scored the best, placing 32 with a score of 5.9. African leaders under the platform of the *New Partnership for African Development* (NEPAD) have collectively devised the African peer review mechanism as a way of checkmating rampant corruption on the continent but this is yet to reduce the incidence of corrupt practices to barest minimum in government operations and activities (Ubakanwa 2007).

Besides Nigeria several African countries have also moved against corruption with varying degrees of commitment and successes. In South Africa, for example, government commitment to holding politicians accountable to their actions is not in doubt. Against this background, Jacob Zuma, the influential former deputy president, was sacked by President Tabo Mbeki in

October, 2005 over alleged financial misconducts. Schabir Shaik, Zuma's financial adviser, had earlier been found guilty of corruption in a case that arose from a government arms procurement deal. The judge said there had been a general corrupt relationship between Shaik and Zuma, and evidence given in Shaik's trial prompted the National Prosecuting Authority to start investigating charges against the African National Congress (ANC) leader (Ishiekwe 2006; Umunna 2007). Although the investigation prompted Mbeki to relieve Zuma of his duties as deputy president, he kept his position of the ANC. Zuma, who insisted that his travails were politically motivated has retained his position as the leader of the ANC. His loud protests did not stop his arraignment at a Durban magistrate court which, however, dismissed the case on September 20, 2006, saying that it had "limped from one disaster to another". Turning down the request of the prosecution to further delay the case, Judge Herbert Msimang threw it out after the prosecution said it was not ready to proceed with the case (Umunna 2007).

On the eastern flanks of Africa, countries such as Tanzania, Malawi and Kenya are similarly stepping up the anti- corruption war. The Tanzanian government has policy of zero tolerance to corruption. Under the leadership of the immediate past President Benjamin Mkapa, it introduced major reforms in 1999 to put in place a system administering public affairs with the highest integrity. The Office of the President established a coordination mechanism under the Minister of State responsible for Good Governance to ensure that the anti-corruption strategies are successfully implemented. It also strengthened the Prevention of Corruption Bureau. Vision 2025, the government's policy paper states that by 2025, good governance should have permeated the national socioeconomic structure, thereby ensuring a culture of accountability, good performance and effectively curbing corruption and other vices (Umunna 2007).

In Malawi, the Africa Corporate Sustainability Forum (ACSF) is spearheading the anti-corruption fight. A private-sector initiative, the ACSF has developed a code of conduct, and expanding it to include government and civil society. It is pertinent to note that in Malawi the fight against corruption has been very tough, although it seems it has been compromised somewhat. For instance, the head of the country's anti-corruption bureau, Gustav Kaliwo was forced to resign after his commission charged former President Bakili Muluzi with 42 counts of corruption, including theft and siphoning \$12m of aid to his private account between 1999 and 2004. The current President, Bingu wa Mutharika, lost his stomach for anti-graft fight when the heat was turned on the former president who handpicked him for office. He could not bear the ugly sight of biting the "finger that fed him" (Ishiekwe 2006).

The situation in Kenya where the anti-corruption commission is in tatters after bruising battles with influential politicians close to the president is hardly different. The fight against corruption launched by President Mwai Kibaki after succeeding long-reigning Daniel Arap Moi in December 2002 is believed to have stagnated despite the setting up of many institutions to fight the vice under the coordinator of Kenyan Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC). Prosecution, which is outside the mandate of the KACC and moves at snail speed, is blamed for the stagnation of the war. The country's judiciary is overburdened with what has been described as "a massive backlog of cases" totaling over a million. The situation is bound to be worsened by a projected 500,000 new cases annually. It has been argued that commitment to the war took a plunge following the departure of John Githongo, the country's anti-graft czar and erstwhile permanent secretary for ethics and governance (Ishiekwe 2006; Umunna 2007).

THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF HIGH-PROFILE CORRUPTION IN AFRICA

From the above experiences of some African countries in combating high-profile corruption it is evident that the theoretical context of corruption could be located within the neo-colonial political economy framework.

At independence, most freed colonies got a neo-colonial state where there is a political free-

dom with economic control and domination by imperialist powers. As several studies have highlighted, neo-colonialists handed political power to emergent African elites whilst retaining the economic foundation of imperialism in a refined manner. The mechanisms of neo-colonization include; finance capital, military assistance and loans (Onimode 1973; Ake 1981; Offiong 2001).

The structural location of Africa as an underdeveloped continent integrated into international capitalism as a periphery, ensured that it supplied raw materials; cocoa, groundnut, cotton, palm produce, oil etc, and served as market of manufactured goods and as area of investment. The prices of both these exported agricultural and mineral raw materials and the imported manufactured goods are determined by the metropolitan capitalist centers. In other words, there is unequal trade, inequality and exploitation (Amin 1971; Rodney 1972; King 2006).

Neo-colonial economy meant that foreign exploitation has been "multilateralised". The State offered generous investment incentives in form of subsidies and protection as well as profit repatriation. This has brought different Multinational Corporations (MNCs) into Africa. Several studies have documented the adverse effects of MNCs to the African economies, policies and society of their host countries (Ake 1981; Osaghae 1998; Offiong 2001). Thus, commercial capitalism in Africa is based on import-export economy with most businesses taking the form of commercial activity, importing, distribution and transportation, wholesale, retail and petty trading (Obadina 2006).

The neo-colonial economy is based on a class structure that includes foreign bourgeoisie represented by expatriate managers of MNCs, the African petty-bourgeoisie which consisted of small number of capitalists, a small group of professionals - doctors, lawyers, senior civil servants, top armed forces personnel, and Africans in the management cadre of foreign firms. The dominated class consisted of a large number of wage labourers, peasants, rural tenant farmers and an expanding class of lumpen elements (Alubo 1995; Offiong 2001; Umunna 2006).

In African neo-colonial economy, power (both political and economic) has been used by the various factions of the ruling class - military, politician, businessmen, etc - especially the latter group who represented the MNCs, the local middlemen from the private sector and state offi-

cials who assisted foreign businessmen in gaining access to the local markets as a means of preserving the status quo. The political and business elites have used power to establish themselves economically through capitalist policies like indigenisation, privatisation, deregulation, Structural Adjustment Programme, etc. The political crisis the continent had undergone such as civil war, coup d'états and counter coups, ethno-religious crisis, violence were generated in the struggle to control the "spoils of the state". Thus the state is crucial for the survival of the comprador bourgeoisie. High-profile corruption and other forms of primitive accumulation are inevitable products of neo-colonial economy (Ake 1981; Alubo 1995; Manuaka 2007).

Corruption emanates from the high rung of the African social stratification system as a mechanism of class formation which is subsequently adopted by the lower groups as means of survival and social mobility. The culture of plunder of treasury and other forms of mismanagement and corrupt practices were generated from the weak economic base of the comprador bourgeoisie. This class is reactionary and conservative and lacks ideological orientation and organisational skills (Mohammed and Mohammed 2000; King 2006).

The neo-colonial economy has also nurtured a value system which glorifies wealth and encourages its accumulation at all cost and by all means. A culture of celebrating "success" without question has been cultivated. Also, the widespread poverty experience by most Africans since 1980s and the failure of World Bank and International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Structural Adjustment Programme has made life difficult. Living standard has drastically declined for most African workers and peasants while their leaders (including political, business and spiritual) who have accumulated wealth through scrupulous means continue to live affluence. The upsurge of unemployment, retrenchment, inflation and collapse of welfare services in health and education and other forms of social dislocations have corrupted the average African worker to source for additional means of livelihood through petty corruption (Okafor 1998; Obadina 2006; Umunna 2006; Adegbamigbe 2007).

In a nutshell, the general idea here is that the main cause of high-profile corruption in Africa could be located in the neo-colonial political economy of the continent. African states have

become the center of primitive accumulation through *praetorianism* and *prebendalism* (Mohammed and Mohammed 2000). The neo-colonial political leadership which lacked economic power saw in the state an opportunity to amass wealth and consequently lacked the moral right to compel the followers to restrain from corruption. Neo-colonial political economy with a comprador leadership set in motion socio-economic and political processes which not only reproduce itself but also make corruption both attractive and inevitable (Onimode 1973; Adegbamigbe 2007; Manuaka 2007).

The situation was heightened by the militarisation of polity and the culture of authoritarianisation and lack of probity and accountability (Osaghae 1998). Since state power has remained the most lucrative business, the struggle to acquire it has been mediated through corrupt practices. Hence, high-profile corruption among African leaders has been one of the major factors responsible for the prevalence of lower class corruption as well (Osu 2005).

CONCLUSION

Corruption poses a serious challenge to democracy and development in African. In the political realm, it undermines democracy and good governance by flouting or even subverting formal processes. Corruption in elections and in legislative procedures undermines accountability and distorts representation in policy-making. In the judiciary, it compromises the rule of law; and corruption in public administration results in imbalance provision of services. Moreover corruption erodes the institutional capacity of government, as procedures are disregarded, resources are siphoned off, and public offices are bought and sold (Okafor 2005).

Furthermore, corruption undermines the legitimacy of government and such democratic values as trust and tolerance. Economically, it undermines development by generating considerable distortions and inefficiency. In the private sector, corruption increases the cost of doing business. Although one may argue that it reduces costs by cutting red tape, the availability of bribes can also induce official to contrive new rules and delays. Where corruption inflates the cost of business, it also distorts the playing field, shielding firms with connections from competition and thereby sustaining inefficient ones.

Corruption also generates economic distortions in the public sector by diverting public investment into capital projects where bribes and kickbacks are plentiful. Officials may increase the technical complexity of public sector projects to conceal or pave way for such dealings, thus further distorts investment.

Corruption lowers compliance with construction, environmental, or other regulations, reduces the quality of government services and infrastructure, and increases budgetary pressure on government. Indeed, one of the factors behind the differing economic development in Asia and Africa, with particular reference to, is that in Africa, corruption has primarily taken the form of rent extraction, with the resulting financial capital moved overseas rather being invested at home.

To combat corruption in transitional continent like Africa requires strong will and determination from all stakeholders especially the political leaders. The leadership must live above board to lay good example for the followership. This is because good governance and responsible leadership demand transparency and accountability.

In addition to this, the institutions saddled with the responsibility of waging war against corruption must do its work impartially. These institutions must be deepened, strengthened and made independent using necessary legislation. As a matter of fact the agencies must remain non-political and just in prosecuting corruption. The fight against corruption is not an illusion, thought it may be totally eradicated, but it could be brought to the barest minimum to ensure rapid socio-economic and political development of African continent.

NOTES

* Nuhu Ribadu was removed as EFCC Chairman in December 2007 and was replaced by a retired police officer, AIG Farida Waziri (Female) in June, 2008.

1 Transition as used in this paper refers to movement of society from tradition to modernity of which the important components are; democracy, industrialisation and urbanization engendered by the forces of globalisation.

2 At the time of writing this paper in late July, 2007, the Commission had arraigned at least five ex-governors in courts for various corruption charges. Those arraigned included; Orji Uzor Kalu (Abia); Joshua Dariye (Plateau); Saminu Turaki (Jigawa); Jolly Nyame (Taraba) and Chimaraoke Nnamani (Enugu) . However, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha (Bayelsa) was sentenced to two years jail term.

3 President Yar'Adua has demonstrated his resolve to intensify the war against corruption by stating during his inaugural speech on May 29th, 2007 that he would lead by example in form of servant-leader. He went ahead to declare his assets and liabilities publicly which is considered unprecedented in the history of Nigeria.

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