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PRESS FREEDOM AND CORRUPTION IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES

OLUSEGUN O.

ABSTRACT

The age-long endemic issue of corruption has been a global menace. However, its multifarious consequences have greater negative impact on the third-world/developing countries in contradistinction to the developed world. This study focuses on press freedom as a panacea to the endemic problem of corruption among other preventive measures particularly as it affects the developing economies using cross country data. For this, more than 15 developing countries are analyzed. Emphasis is placed on both the private and public sectors of the understudied nations. The empirical findings of the study reveal that there is high incidence of corruption in developing economies with less or no tolerance for press freedom. The upshot of the study is that the governments of the developing countries should focus more on press freedom as a catalyst for curtailing the high level of corruption.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the issue of corruption, particularly in the third-world countries has attracted global attention to this end, different countries have adopted several multi-dimensional measures to eliminate, where possible or reduce the vice and its attendant adverse effects to the barest minimum level. These measures range from government policies to legislative enactments to curb corruption. A novel dimension to the fight against corruption is the fundamental role of the press otherwise referred to as fourth estate of realm in some climes.

Corruption is defined as;

Depravity, pervasion, or taint; an impairment of integrity, virtue, or moral principle; especially the impairment of a public official's duties by bribery;

or

The act of doing something with an intent to give some advantage inconsistent with official duty and the rights of others; a fiduciary's or official's use of a station or office to procure some benefit either personally or for someone else, contrary to the rights of others.¹

It is pertinent to note from the outset what press freedom means and its pivotal role of curbing corruption and corrupt practices prevalent in the third world countries. The concept of liberty of the press or press freedom has long held the attention of jurists. Blackstone lays down the scope of the concept as follows:

Liberty of the press consists in laying no previous restraints upon publication and not in freedom from censure for criminal matters where published. Every man has the undoubted right to lay what sentiment he pleases before the public . . . to forbid that is to destroy the freedom of the press – but if he publishes what is illegal or mischievous he must face the consequences of his own temerity.²

Freedom of expression otherwise garbed in the cloak of press freedom is a fundamental human right as stated in Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Howbeit, in order to make freedom of expression a reality, a legal and regulatory environment must exist that allows for an open and pluralistic media sector to emerge; political will to support the sector and the rule of law to protect it for it to exist, there must also be laws ensuring access to information, especially information in the public domain. It should be noted that the fuel that drives their engine is information and therefore access to information is critical. Freedom of information laws, which permits access to public information is very essential, and so is the only means by which information is made effectively available.

ENDEMIC PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES

The phenomenon referred to as corruption comprises the sundry forms of abuse of power (*economic, political and administrative*) which all result in obtaining personal or collective benefits to the detriment of the rights and lawful interests of an individual, groups or the whole society. Corruption hinders development virtually everywhere, thus harming the social, political and economic life of any society. It distorts choice, increases costs of products and services, promotes unproductive investment, contributes to decline of living standards and undermines democracy and social integrity.

Cases of bribery and corruption are reported almost daily around the world. There is no scarcity of scandals that illustrate the depth and pervasiveness of corruption. Examples include the shady funding of political parties in Africa and some parts of Asia and payment of bribes to high level officials for major contracts in many countries. It is essential to note that there are two sides to corruption; the demand side of corruption (*bribe-takers*) and the supply-side for corruption (*bribe-givers*). Sometimes a third party may be involved where a bribe is transferred for that person's benefit rather than the persons directly involved in the corrupt activity.

According to World Bank, corruption is "*the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development. It undermines development by distorting the rule of law and weakening the institutional foundation on which economic growth depends.*"³ The Transparency International describes corruption as, "*... one of the greatest challenges of the contemporary world. It undermines good government, fundamentally distorts public policy, leads to the misallocation of resources, harms the private sector and private development and particularly hurts the poor.*"⁴

The World Bank however depicts corruption in a more encompassing words as follows,

*The abuse of public office for private gains. Public office is abused for private gain when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can also be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, the theft of state assets or the diversion of state revenue.*⁵

This seemingly exhaustive definition appears to cover most of the obvious corrupt acts of human beings such as *extortion, bribery, stealing of state assets* and diversion of state revenues to private assets or accounts. All these corrupt acts mentioned above are common in third world countries today. It is therefore common occurrences to hear cases of extortion and bribery, money laundering, diversion of public assets among the police, civil servants, political office holders e.t.c. while cases of stealing of state assets

and diversion of state revenues are more evident among public office holders and top government officials in all these third world countries (*largely in Africa and some parts of Asia*).

A writer commenting on the situation in India about corruption has aptly summed up the problem thus:

... and the pursuit of power has blinded politicians whose disregard for values and decency in public life is matched by greed and untamed ambition. Where service to the people should have been the chosen path, our politicians have adopted the way of parasites who thrive by living at the cost of others. And to sustain themselves in power they have joined hands with criminals and thugs and have even opened for them the doors of political parties, state legislatures and, in some cases, of parliament itself. It is not the quality of the debate that has simply suffered in these amongst bodies but their credibility and capacity to guard the rights of the people against encroachment by an executive not known for believing in the principle of public accountability.⁶

The causes of corruption are rooted in a country's political and legal development, its social history, bureaucratic traditions, economic conditions and policies. It has however been observed that the weaker the institutions of governance are, the more prevalent is corruption. It should be noted that there are certain conditions that facilitate corruption in the third world countries and of course, the world in general. The factors listed below are more noticeable in the third world countries and the developing economies.

Firstly, the prevalent political conditions which entrenched corruption include weak *civil liberties*. These largely stem from lack of transparency and accountability on the part of government officials especially where the ruling elite have 'captured' the state. In most of the countries in question, the governments often have extensive involvement in the economy and regulation of public life. Another noticeable factor is the *Bureaucratic tendencies* of the government of the day with the attendant increase in discretionary powers for the bureaucrats. This allows select individuals to gain direct access to state resources and to enjoy considerable privileges associated with administrative office.

The *Legal System or Judicial process* of most of the third world countries equally enhances the level of corruption. The quality of a country's legal system, in terms of effective and all-embracing anti-corruption laws, efficient police force and other anti-corruption agencies and above all an independent judiciary. *The Socio-Cultural Values* entrenched among the government and the governed in most of these third world countries equally determines the level of corruption. In most of these third world countries, premium

value, honour and misguided dignity is often ascribed to the wealthy or aristocrats in the society irrespective of the source of such wealth, that is, whether ill-gotten or otherwise, which in turn has greatly enhanced get-rich-quick syndrome among the government officials and even their collaborators in the private sectors.

It has equally been argued that *economic factor* is largely responsible for corruption in the third world countries since the standard of living is so poor that every opportunity to enhance people's standard of living is often scuttled by the greedy few who have unfettered access to government resources. However, another school of thought has played-down the economic factor as a cause for corruption in the third world countries since the rich few are more involved in large-scale corruption by channeling for their private use what otherwise belongs to the public.

In *Malaysia*, like every other developing nations in Africa where incidence of corruption is high, every efforts made by the successive government were thwarted by matters like access to information, a free press, an independent judiciary and the establishment of an ombudsman are not difficult to achieve. The corruption trend in the developing countries tend to be assuming a dangerous proportion even in the recent times where the generality of the populace who are impoverished by the trend appears to be disenchanting.

In this regard, the case of *Indonesia* readily comes to mind where the civil populace took to the major streets of Jakarta, the capital city on Wednesday 10th December, 2009 protesting the alleged fraud that trailed the bail-out for Bank Century. The protests coincided with the United Nations International Day against corruption.

On November 2, 2009, the Indonesian Government and Bank Indonesia, under the Committee for Financial Sector Stability (KSSK), had agreed to inject US \$67 million to bail-out Bank Century, owing to fears that the imminent collapse of the bank at the height of the global financial meltdown would threaten the entire banking system in the country, but the Supreme Audit Agency (BKP) later released a report which alleged legal violations in the phases of the bailout. It also noted that the report on the condition of the Bank Century, as was postulated by the KSSK before considering the option of bailout, was false and the imbroglio later sparked off the mass protest. It was reported that hundreds of protesters, comprising about 40 non-governmental organizations, took part in the protest along Merdeka Barat, Thamrin, Merdeka Palace and Merdeka Ultra roads.⁷

Although the amount of money that corruption costs the private sector is difficult to assess, a private sector survey conducted in *Pakistan*⁸ shows that bribes paid annually in 1995, commonly ranged between US \$4,000 and \$20,000. This amount represents between 1.25 and 5.15 per cent of a firm's gross sales, depending on the sector and size of the firm. Small-sized firms and those engaged in commerce faced a relatively higher burden of corrupt payments than others. The value of bribes did not decrease

proportionally to the size of the firm, and it is probable that commercial activities require more licenses (*and hence, more bribes*) than other activities.

Also in *Pakistan*,⁹ senior management spends an average of twelve per cent of their time dealing with officials on tax and regulatory requirements. Although it is not known how much time would have been spent without corruption, it does take time to negotiate corruption arrangements and to build the necessary personal relations to secure the illegal transaction. The more complex the transaction, such as corruption in public procurement or political corruption, the more time and money it costs the private sector.

THE MENACE OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Corruption in Nigeria is as old as, Nigeria. It is embedded in the ethos, practices, conduct, beliefs, sayings, culture, idiosyncrasies and heritage of Nigeria. Corruption in Nigeria is a cankerworm that has, sadly, eaten very deep into fabrics of human societies. In contemporary Nigeria, corruption, in public offices, pre-dated Nigeria's independence. There were allegations of corrupt practices against civil servants and police officers long before Independence. Also, large scale, grand-style electoral fraud and wanton stealing of public funds characterized the First Republic.¹⁰

On the issue of corruption, a public commentator lamenting the Nigerian situation noted:

*... for a long time, we have been operating plutocracy, that is, government of thieves by thieves and for thieves. And the entire society was enmeshed in these. It doesn't matter how long you go, you will find givers and takers. It doesn't matter how high you go, you will find givers and takers, obviously, we can't go on like this. Nigeria can never be a great country until corruption ceases to be an issue. There is corruption everywhere.*¹¹

The manifestations of corruption in Nigeria today include: contracts inflation, up-front payment by politicians for electoral positions (*cash and carry politics*), unjust court judgments, sacking of corrupt judges, dismissal of police and military personnel, arrest of governors outside Nigeria, collection of bribes/gratification from civil populace, arrest and trial of a former Inspector General of Police and Governors by Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (*an anti-graft agency*), ostentations lifestyle of rulers, even admissions scam in Nigeria Higher Institutions of learning, to mention but a few.

In Nigeria, as indeed several African States, what appears to be devastating corrupt practices is the alarming phenomena of political leaders stealing billions and trillions of money which are public funds directly or through contracts awarded to personal companies without disclosure or contracts which were awarded only on paper but in the real sense of it, non-existent.

The level of corruption in a geo-political entity called Nigeria has reached a frightening height and dangerous proportion that the head of one of the vibrant anti-graft agency in Nigeria¹² was quoted to have stated thus:

... having dealt with many corruption cases, I am inclined to suggest that public officers should be subjected to some form of psychiatric evaluation to determine their suitability for public office. The extent of aggrandizement and gluttonous accumulation of wealth that I have observed suggests to me that some people are mentally and psychologically unsuitable for public office.

She went further when she submitted that:

We have observed people's amassing public wealth to a point of suggesting 'madness' or some form of obsessive-compulsive psychiatric disorder.

The Transparency International (TI) in its 2009 Global Corruption Barometer report¹³ listed Nigeria among the most politically corrupt nations in the world. The reports also had it that *African Countries* were most largely affected by bribery. The most affected countries were *Cameroon, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda* with more than 50 per cent rate, while countries like Russia, Ghana, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya and Senegal fell within the category of Group 2, that is between 23-43 per cent rate. Nigeria fell within Group 3 (*Between 13 and 22 per cent rate*) with countries like Pakistan, Ukraine etc. It is important to note that corruption though a universal problem yet it is more manifested in the developing/third world countries than the developed countries because of their devastating consequences.

Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad¹⁴ described the adverse effects of corruption in Nigeria and other developing nations as follows:

Truly corruption is the bane of Governments and countries. It increase the cost of administration and development, it delays constructions and projects, it obstructs progress of the country. Developments cannot be made and wealth for the nation and the people cannot be increased.¹⁵

He posited further that;

The reputation of the country would be badly affected and investors and entrepreneurs, whether local or foreign would avoid investing, causing unemployment with all the social side effects. Businesses just cannot thrive and Government revenue would be reduced. Public works cannot be implemented, undermining the construction

of infrastructure and pushing living standards down. The country could not be able to climb out of poverty and would remain a Third World Country.¹⁶

In its editorial, a newspaper¹⁷ widely circulated in Nigeria stated, in apparent reaction to the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (C.P.I) of domestic public sector corruption for year 2009 thus:

Corruption is everywhere now, from schools, to churches, to traditional institutions, to political parties and it continues to spread. We run a political system that lacks legitimacy so that it should not come as a surprise that corruption has become endemic.

It is observed further that:

Moreover, in a situation where our legislators according to the Transparency International (T.I), are the highest paid on earth and our civil servants one of the least paid, the aggravated polarization of the rich and poor promoted by the Nigerian system can only breed discontent and corruption.¹⁸

Several factors which are responsible for the thriving and sustenance of corruption in the third world countries have earlier been identified, however most of the successive governments in these countries have failed to identify the freedom of the press as a pivotal factor for stemming the menace.

CORRUPTION AND PRESS FREEDOM

Press Freedom, otherwise known as the Freedom of Expression is a fundamental human right as stated in Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human and peoples Rights which has been domesticated or grafted into the municipal laws of various nations provides;

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Press Freedom is still not guaranteed in many parts of the world. With hundreds of journalists killed all over the world in the last three years, tens of dozens more threatened, imprisoned or tortured, it is not difficult to understand the challenges that must be overcome. These acts are unconscionable, not only because they violate the human rights of individuals, but also because they are detrimental to good governance and democracy, namely, the flow of accurate and reliable information.

It cannot be over-emphasized that as at today, it becomes increasingly evident that the responsibility to accurate, fair and unbiased reporting is critical to the media's relevance and respectability in a society and to the community's ability to fulfill its role in a democracy. Without the informed participation of its citizenry, a democracy is sure to crumble. If those in power are manipulating journalists, the media become a propaganda tool plunging the society into ignorance, indifference and despair particularly where very revealing information about public officers are either suppressed or manipulated when such bothers on misappropriation of public funds and other sundry fraudulent practices. The issue of press freedom, leadership and corruption is a crucial issue for our times in terms of corrupt-free society particularly as it engenders poverty in the third world countries. Sadly, it gets too little attention.

In one of its editorials, 'The Citizen' a daily newspaper in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania¹⁹ clearly stated that any attempts by the Tanzanian government to silence the press should be resisted while reporting a protest by the journalists in the Tanzanian Capital of Dar es Salaam.

The Editorial States thus: It is important, therefore, that the authorities are made to understand that we shall not agree to be silenced, as that would be an abdication of our role in society, which is to inform, educate and mobilize our people for development. We are also the society's watchdog, and, therefore, have the obligation to monitor the performance of our national leaders and the heads of the Public and Private sectors. The media must not be intimidated into shunning their responsibility to shape the society and its political and economic shepherd. But should any media house err, there are enough laws and regulations to deal with that.

The importance of the role of the Press in nation building cannot be over-emphasized particularly through information dissemination on the activities of the political office-holders and other public officers. In Nigeria, for instance, an attempt by a member of the House of Representative to ensure that a bill which if passed to law will provide a right of access to public information or records kept by government, public institutions or private bodies carrying out public functions for citizens and non-citizens alike was twice thwarted by the members of the House of Representative.

The bill popularly referred to as the Freedom of Information bill (FOI) if passed to law is intended to increase the availability of public records and information to citizens, to enable them participate more effectively in the making and administration of laws and policies. Regrettably, the bill which if passed to law would promote accountability and good governance, by making the society more open was jettisoned. In its editorial titled 'The beleaguered FOI Bill' 'The Guardian' Newspaper²⁰ observed as follows:

It is obvious that the unacceptable level of graft in the polity is traceable directly to the ability and capacity of office holders and

their accomplices to cover their tracks by denying the public access to official records. Often it takes a probe such as the country has witnessed in the scandalous power sector, to unravel corrupt practices which wreak untold havoc.

Also, in its own reaction to the failure of the House of Representative to pass the Freedom of Information Bill (FOI) to law in Nigeria, another daily newspaper²¹ in its editorial commented as follows:

The bill, with its long and jaw-breaking appellation, seems far-reaching. This in itself could intimidate, as it seems to want to get all information 'under the sun' from and about public functionaries. But that is what such a bill should seek to do. If it failed to sail through in the past we can understand.

The guilty could have been afraid. The time was probably not just auspicious, given the pervasive corruption not just in material terms, but also in the socio-political fabric of the country at the time . . . The result of all these is that journalists and other members of the society are denied access to information that is critical for accurate reporting, and unraveling the web of corruption in Nigeria.

Interestingly, after the FOI (Freedom of Information) bill brouhaha, another serious attempt was made to effectively silence the press particularly on the activities of the political/public office holders. Recently, a bill which if passed into law would repeal the Nigeria Press Council Act 1992 and establish the Nigerian Press and Practice of Journalism Council was sponsored on the floor of the House of Representatives. However, the said proposed bill has been condemned and criticized by the Journalists and Civil Societies among other non-governmental organizations.

A group known as the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) in its reaction to the proposed bill petitioned the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to information in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Right in Banjul, The Gambia²² wherein it stated among others that:

We are seriously concerned that if passed into law, the bill would contravene Nigeria's international legal obligations, including under the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the International Covenant on civil and Political Rights and the U. N convention against corruption to which Nigeria is a signatory. The bill also directly violates section 22 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, which requires the press to hold the government accountable to the people.

The group (a non-governmental organization) further highlighted the consequences of passing the proposed bill into law thus:

*The implementation of the bill would undermine and limit the citizens' rights to freedom of opinion and expression; including the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. . . The proposed bill is coming at a time when Nigeria has performed very poorly in the Transparency International 2009 Corruption Perception Index, ranking 130th of the 180 countries surveyed. The bill would further undermine the fight against corruption in the country, and the ability of the government to fully implement its international obligations and commitments. Without Press Freedom, it is much easier for the Government to take away other Human Rights and to perpetrate official and large scale Corruption.*²³

The war against the press by the successive corrupt government in Nigeria is not limited to the enactment of anti-press laws but also vicious and violent attacks on the journalists for publishing what their assailant termed 'unfriendly reportage of events in the nation'. In year 2009 alone, one of the states in the Northern part of Nigeria recorded scores of cases of threats, harassment and assaults on journalists.²⁴ It is an understatement to state that press freedom was very close to politics as nothing could be more intrusive on politicians than a free press. There is nothing that could enfranchise people more than a free press particularly in the third world countries. A free press has to be understood as being a crucial key in the reduction of poverty, for development in both its social and economic aspects. It helps to show the government, or remind it when necessary, where its true responsibilities lie.

Ensuring freedom of the media in the developing countries is a priority which helps to entrench good governance. Independent, free and pluralistic media are central to good governance in democracies that are young. Free media can ensure transparency, accountability and the rule of law; they promote participation in public and political discourse, and contribute to the fight against corruption and consequently poverty. An independent media sector draws its power from the community to be a full partner in the democratic process.

Freedom of information and freedom of expression are the founding principles for effective fight against corruption in the developing countries, the menace of corruption can only be effectively tackled when the citizenry are well-informed and have access to information which will aid other anti-graft agencies and even the civil societies to combat the corrupt public office holders and politicians.

The role of the press in information dissemination has without doubt helps to reduce the incidence of corrupt practices in the third world countries. For instance, the press in Nairobi the capital of Kenya reported the strike recently embarked upon by the bus owners over extortion by the police in the country. The chairman of an association representing the bus owners and workers in the country claimed that bus owners and drivers pay more than \$20 million a year in bribes²⁵.

The official states further that- A police officer from the traffic department goes home every day with no less than 5,000 shillings (\$65) in his pockets . . . all gained through extortion.

FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES

It is noteworthy that Third World Countries have realized that they remain in the group of developing countries in spite of the God-endowed resources available to them i.e. both human, material and natural resources since what could have been the gains from these resources are lost to the menace of corruption. The growing concerns of different governments and the entire populace of these nations which wallow in abject poverty have necessitated the multifarious efforts being made by the nations at curbing the incidence of corruption in their various countries. However, it is still subject to debate whether the measures being adopted to eliminate corruption in these nations are effective and result-oriented.

In *Malaysia*, the prevalence of corruption has been acknowledged by the government and various steps have been taken to prevent and eradicate it. Despite the measures, however the incidence of corruption has escalated. The spread of corruption, incompetence, malpractices, abuse of power, fraud and other unethical behaviour as well as lack of work motivation, have been attributed to the decline in integrity among individuals, organizations and society at large.

In furtherance of its effort at eradicating corruption in Malaysia, Transparency International Malaysia worked with the Federation of Publicly Listed Companies and the Malaysian Institute of Corporate Governance. It seems indeed that one of the lessons that can be drawn from the Southeast Asian Crisis is that there should be full disclosure of information and the development of national codes on best practices of corporate governance²⁶.

Also in *Mauritius*, the local Transparency International Chapter and the Minister of Justice organized a National Integrity Workshop in February 1998, drawing upon a business survey and a household survey of experiences with corruption. A member of Transparency Mauritius explains:

We had a lot press coverage and a lot of decisions were taken. Too many decisions, probably, because it's difficult to follow up as we

*are all volunteers. But I must say that we've managed to get a certain amount of sensitization around, and today it is interesting to see that in both private and public sectors, there is an awareness that we have to fight against corruption*²⁷.

The *Philippines* experience of corrupt practices in the country clearly shows that fighting the menace requires more than legal enactments but self-will and the desire of the populace to have a culture that has zero tolerance for corruption. In the late 1980's the Philippines entered the Guinness book of World Records for allegedly the biggest corruption of all time. The *Angolan* situation is not much different from other third world countries. President Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola while recently inaugurating a new government warned that the country would pass a new law to end widespread corruption and embezzlement in one of Africa's biggest oil producing nations. He referred to the new law to be passed as 'Law of Administrative Probity' which would enable public servants to carryout their jobs with "honesty, honour and integrity of character".

Billions of oil revenues and loans from china to help rebuild infrastructure destroyed by a 27 year old civil war that ended in 2002 have helped turn Angola into one of the world's fastest growing economies, ironically the country is one of the world's 18 most corrupt nations, according to a survey by Transparency International, and despite its vast oil and mineral wealth, an estimated two-thirds of Angolans live on less than \$2 a day, according to the world bank²⁸.

NIGERIA EXPERIENCE

It was in realization of the fact that corruption is a global phenomenon and the danger it portends that the General Assembly of the United Nations, by its headquarters in New York, set aside December 9 of every year as International Anti-Corruption Day in order to raise awareness about corruption menace and the role of the United Nations convention against corruption. The convention states inter-alia that the United Nations is "concerned about the seriousness of problems and threats posed by corruption to the stability and security of societies, undermining the institutions and values of democracy, ethical values, sustainable development and the rule of law."

Suffice it to state that Nigeria is among the 140 nations that signed the Convention document on December 9, 2003 while it ratified it on December 14, 2004. In Nigeria, the incidence of corruption pre-dates the Nigeria independence in 1960 but it became so manifest and noticeable after the independence. Over the years, different laws have been enacted as a direct response to the menace of corrupt practices in Nigeria and the financial recklessness of its Military and Political leaders.

Sections 98-116 of the Criminal code provide for offences relating to official corruption. These are chiefly classified into bribery and extortion. Other enactments

include but not limited to the Criminal Justice (*Miscellaneous Provisions*) Decree No. 84 of 1966, Corrupt Practices Decree No. 38 of 1975. The code of Conduct as provided for in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999; Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Act 2000 and The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Act, 2004 (EFCC Act, 2004 LFN). It is imperative to note that until the return of Nigeria to democracy in 1999 nothing much was achieved by successive military governments which looted the national treasury with grave impunity. Obviously, the crusade against graft in Nigeria under the present dispensation has greatly improved on the shaky structures laid by previous successive administration. The setting up of the Nigerian Extractive Transparency Industries (NETI) as well as enacting of the Public Procurement Act 2007 and the Fiscal Responsibility Act 2007 are worthy steps in the right direction.

Also, of great importance is the beaming of searchlight on the private sector where corruption has thrived unnoticed for so many years. In this regard, the present ongoing reforms by the Central bank of Nigeria (CBN) of the banking sector is worthy of mention. The fight against corruption in Nigeria is, indeed, yielding positive results, for instance in year 2005, the Paris Club of Creditors gave Nigeria a debt relief of 18 billion USD while over \$60 billion USD have been recovered by the anti-graft agencies from corrupt public and private office holders and their collaborators. However, Nigeria, like other third world countries has a lot to do in order to sustain and increase the tempo of fight against corrupt practices and related offences by adopting holistic approach.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the implementation of anti-corruption programmes is always meant to run against strong political obstacles, it might be pertinent to raise the question of the best path to follow to reach a low corruption state. Ensuring freedom for the media around the world is a priority. Independent, free and pluralistic media are central to good governance in democracies that are young and old. Free media can ensure transparency, accountability and the rule of law; they promote participation in public and political discourse and contribute to the fight against corruption and poverty among other measures particularly where the government is tolerant. An independent media sector draws its power from the community it serves and in return empowers that community to be full a partner in the democratic process.

* Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made: (i) a free press devoid of any government interference in its role of information dissemination should be encouraged and given enabling environment to operate (ii) laws that will give life to freedom of expression and free press which will avail the press unhindered access to information relating to both public and private sectors financial

activities should be enacted and enforced, (iii) the anti-graft agencies should be adequately funded and sufficiently immuned from the control and interference of the government, while its activities within and outside court-rooms should be given enormous publicity, (iv) also, the members of the public in these nations must abhor culture that promotes profligacy and honour should only be bestowed in those whose means of livelihood are devoid of financial malpractices, and (v) Whistle blowing should be encouraged both in the private and public sector. What is whistle-blowing? It means the disclosure by organization members (former or current) of illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organizations (exempl, anti-graft agencies) that may be able to effect action. *

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