

## Democratization and Corruption in Religious Environment: The Nigerian Experience

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**Abstract.** The late 20<sup>th</sup> century till date has greatly witnessed paradigm shift in democratization crusade around African continents where Nigeria belongs. This becomes significant and crucial in order to perpetually keep the military cabals in the barrack. Thus, stable democracy becomes the only solution to the perennial problems of corruption, insecurity, religious violence and political angst in Nigeria. This paper adopts historio-political and ethico-religious methods leading to the fact that religious and corrupt-free society can be the only hallmark of sustaining democratization process in Nigeria. As a matter of fact, this paper seeks to postulate that democracy should be allowed to grow and build domestic consensus, reassert and readdress corporate participation and as well assume new roles indispensable for keeping and extending the life span of democracy and to immune it against military regime since Nigerians are religious in all things. To this end, democratization as an institution is aimed at furthering political conscientization processes propelled by political regimes and continuously assume new roles in keeping with the exigencies of times and the political developments around them. This would make democratization the only game in town.

**Keywords:** Corruption, Democratization, Democracy, Religious Society, Nigeria

### 1. Introduction

The late 20<sup>th</sup> century till date has witnessed swift change in democratization crusade around

African continents including Nigeria. This significant and timely change became crucial consequent upon the need to terminate military cabals, one-party system and authoritarian rule. Thus, this democratization pressure was seen to be the only solution to the perennial political angst in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. The agitation from people, who, having been raped and fluffed by the military rules coupled with corruption, mismanagement and hardship, was to benefit from the political dividends, which they believed a democratic era would usher in. Today, virtually all the African nations including Nigeria are enjoying democratic dividends. For the first time in history, Nigeria has succeeded in handing over governance from civilian to civilian government, which is a mark of democratic consolidation. In deed, the continuous existence of a vibrant and solid society like Nigeria is the product of democratization, which is indispensable and non-negotiable.

However, with democracy at hand, Nigeria is still swinging in comfort with corruption and mismanagement. In fact, round and about us corruption beams, corrupt men and women are the beloved while the hated are those who spurn the vermin. In essence, corruption has berthed permanently on the Nigerian shores. It soars in all tiers of government in the last and current dispensation. Corruption, as the unlimited ostentation of wealth amassing and arrant obscenity in Nigerian culture is an unholy bedfellow with democratization. The message of

democratization stands sharply in contrast with the wave of corruption. It is therefore the intention of this paper to tersely examine the basic concepts of democratization and corruption in the Nigerian context. The paper shall conclude by recommending blueprints for democratic development as a re-appraisal of the political destiny of Nigeria.

## 2. Conceptualizing Democratization

A conceptual discussion of this kind cannot be fully comprehended without an insight or in-depth understanding of democracy *per se*. Democracy as a concept originated from the Greek-city state or the *polis* around 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. as “demo-cratia” meaning “rule of the people.” Democracy emerged as the government of the masses or the government of the vast majority with collective participation. Thus, this concept represented the interest of the people either directly or indirectly in the *polis*. As a result of civilization in the city state, representatives at a public forum were recognised to articulate the interest of the vast majority. By and large, various dimensions came to expound the meaning of democracy and its set objectives. Despite the fact that a handful of scholars have written about democracy, it is difficult to satisfy its definitive quest. Be that as it may, the concept remains the best option to ensure understanding of its very meaning between the leaders and the led with a view to regulating and appreciating the instrument of power control among the leaders.

Schmitter sees democracy as the “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.”<sup>1</sup> Howell posits that democracy is a political process where rulers are held accountable to the ruled by a variety of political arrangements, which include regular competitive multi-party elections and where those holding political office do not have automatic security of tenure.<sup>2</sup> However, Eyinla argues that two fundamental elements in this definition are crucial and prevalent. They are contestation and participation.<sup>3</sup> He buttresses further that “a polity is democratic to the extent to which the

collective decision makers are selected or displaced through free, fair and periodic elections based on universal adult suffrage and where candidates freely compete for votes.”<sup>4</sup> Madison *et al* describe democracy as a set of institutions, including the three tiers of government, each of which is supposed to check and be checked by the other two, in order to maintain liberties and avoid tyranny, even of a majority against a minority.<sup>5</sup> Applying cultural approach to the meaning of democracy, Rustow defines democracy as a problem-solving formula for power-sharing in which significant groups in society, either directly or through representative elites, negotiate from time to time over issues that are important to them all.”

Of paramount importance in this definition is the bargained interests that are entered into or reached that suffice for the time being. Often times, new issues arise, as old ones are replaced or even atrophy and as groups’ need change. Where negotiations are properly and honestly conducted, groups make concessions in one area in order that they may win concessions in other areas. In which case, any agreement worked out is the best possible for the whole society at the time, it is at most the second best for any of the negotiating groups. Having considered the various definitions of democracy, the most widely acceptable and enduring is the one given by the 16<sup>th</sup> American president Abraham Lincoln (1809-65), “as government of the people, by the people and for the people”. This means total representation, full participation and flawless accountability to the people by the electors because the people are the government entrusted to the few who represent their interest at the top. Thus, the implication of the three conditions of representation, full participation and completely accountability traced back to city-state is indicative of its level of democratization.

By indication, democratization as Juan Clinz and Alfred Stepan argue can only be said to take place after a transition to democracy has taken place. They define democratization as *a political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules and*

*patterned incentives and disincentives has become, in a phrase, the only game in town.*

Oche supports the notion of democratization as being in consonance with the only game in town and is thus premised on a tripod operationalizational inference comprising behavioural, attitudinal and constitutional dimensions. Behaviourally speaking, a democratic regime can as well be regarded as consolidated when no significant major player will attempt to achieve its set goals either through the creation of a non-democratic or undemocratic or by way of secession. In attitudinal level, Oche states that a democracy is consolidated when the overwhelming majority of public opinion is constantly and consistently supportive of democratic procedures, processes and institutions as being the sole appropriate method of conducting governance and public affairs. In constitutional terms, a democracy can be said to be democratized when government and non-government actors *become subject to, and habituated to, the resolution of conflict within the bounds of the specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process.*

In fact, for a nation to be regarded as being democratized, a democracy must develop along the aforementioned conditions of behavioural, attitudinal and constitutional lines and qualities that are catalysts for democratic essence. Put variously, democratization and democratic consolidation transcend elaborate formalities of patterning constitutions and establishing institutions. As a process, democratization places much emphasis on the cultivation and growth of the critical behavioural and attitudinal underpinnings, which are solid foundations for a sustainable, vibrant and viable democratic system.

By extension, democratization depicts the deliberate construction of democratic political mechanisms and institutions. As a process, it strengthens state structures and develops accountable and responsive forms of governance. Eyinla however asserts that democratization can result in full or partial transition. Hear him:

*Full democratic transition is the inauguration of a new democratic government in which there is a peaceful transfer of power from one set of political personnel to another, while partial democratic transition connotes a situation where authoritarian leaders retain their office in the aftermath of multiparty elections. As a process democratization is therefore concerned with the establishment and strengthening of the institutional principles and mechanisms that define a democratic regime. The success or failure of a democratization process is determined by the extent to which the earlier enumerated elements of democracy are established.*

To this end, democratization is a democratic institution aimed at furthering political conscientisation processes propelled by political regime and continuously assume new roles in keeping with the exigencies of the times and the political developments around them. Also, democratic consolidation is thus the positive end of securing democracy, extending its life span beyond the short term and making it immune against the threat of regression to autocratic rule and of reducing the probability of democratic breakdown, to the point where it can be reasonably assumed that democratic tenet will persist in the near future in the face of any threat. Schmitter adds that democratization is the process of transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms and contingent solutions that have emerged during the democratic transition process into relations of co-operation and competition that are reliably known, regularly practiced and voluntarily accepted by those who participate in democratic governance. However, the commonest feature in the realm of democratization that stands out unquestionably is process. Process in this context means a gradual and developmental stage of growth and time to advance to maturity.

Nevertheless, democratization process can be better sustained when the elements of democracy are vigorously pursued and upheld. Any democratic alternatives to the processes of completing transition have the propensity of democratic breakdown and democratic evaporation. In a democratic setting, the concept

of democratic breakdown, one with which Nigerians are all too familiar, which we shall turn shortly, “denotes a total dysfunctionality and failure of the democratic system leading to the supplanting of the system through a *coup d’etat* or any other anti-democratic process that culminates in the establishment or restoration of an authoritarian system. Seen in this light therefore, a major goal of democratic consolidation is to avoid a breakdown of democracy.”

### 3. Corruption

The term corruption is not restricted to smooth definition, but going by Khan’s definition, it means a “behaviour which deviates from the formal rules of conducts governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private-regarding motives such as wealth, power or status”. Chambers 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dictionary, sees corruption among others as “rotteness; putrid matter; impurity; bribery; corruption is sometime understood as bribery, which is defined as a price, reward, gift or favour bestowed or promised with a view to pervert judgement or corrupt the conduct especially of a person in a position of trust.<sup>20</sup> However, bribery is a dimension of corruption, and is not the only *raison de etre* for an abuse of office.

Kong in another vein defines corruption as “the extraction and acceptance of payment from private entities by public officials, and the private misappropriation and abuse of public funds”. This definition is comparatively broad. It covers three aspects of corrupt practices, bribery, embezzlement, and abuse of public fund, which may include pranks associated with inflated contracts, and over-invoicing. Such sharp practices are employed to unlawfully transfer public wealth into private coffers through the agreement of officials and suppliers, contractors, or “conmen and women”<sup>22</sup>In the words of Dey, corruption is “any act undertaken with the deliberate intent of deriving or extracting monetary or other benefits by encouraging or conniving at illegal activities”<sup>23</sup>Friedrich observes that corruption in terms of transaction is between corrupters and corruptees. He notes with precision that:

*Corruption can be said to exist whenever a power holder who is charged with doing certain things, i.e, who is a responsible functionary or office holder is by monetary or other rewards not legally provided for, induced to take actions which favour whoever provides the rewards and thereby does damage to the public interest.*

While Osoba posits that corruption has moral and legal implications. To him, corruption, *is a form of anti-social behaviour by an individual and social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is consistent with the established legal norms and prevailing moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for the material and spiritual wellbeing of all members of society in a just and equitable manner.*

Corruption as a practical and realistic concept has many fangs especially in the areas of bribery, kickback, nepotism, favouritism and among others. In other words, *corrupt practices will embrace receiving of kickbacks, misappropriation of funds, nepotism, extortions, employment patronage and so forth. A corruptionist, on this showing, will be one who defends or who practices corruption.*

It is interesting to note that these various forms of corruption have grossly affected political and socio-economic aspects of lives. Thus, the nature, structure and manifestations of corruption in the historical, legal, religious and social terms are “trendy” issues. Here, its causes must be noted so as to appreciate the understanding of corruption. Among them are greed, unemployment, poverty, moral decadence in the polity, liberal political economy with its pillars being liberalization or deregulation, privatization of public enterprises, inflation, and the non-accountability of office holders and lack of transparency. In other words, Corruption as a bane to democratization rears its ugly head through acute unemployment to grinding poverty with an appalling state of insecurity and political instability, the reality of the conditions in all the facets of the society such as sports, institutions, public and private offices. In fact,

Yves Meny is apposite when he summarises the various causes of corruption in this paradigm.

*The causes of corruption are sought in wholly different directions, depending on the ideological stance and preferences of the seeker. The neo-liberal school considers corruption to be one of the effects of the black market caused by excessive state intervention. The more the state intervenes, the more it legislates, and the more it develops interfering bureaucracies, the greater the risks of parallel procedures and markets spawning unlawful conduct. On the other hand, those who are not convinced of the state's intrinsic perversity or the market's unquestionable merits stress another aspect: the erosion of public ethics, the loss of state's legitimate status as the incarnation of the general interest, and the dilution of communal values through the pursuit of profit and the defence of selfish private interests.*

From the foregoing observation, it is pertinent to note that despite the position or the role of the state coupled with the social elites and the Marxists in the issues that give leeway to corruption, the state has the prerogative to guarantee, defend and promote human welfare, dignity, security and freedom by its active involvement in national economic planning and management in order to reduce the excesses of capitalist and exploitative tendencies inherent in capitalist social organisations.

#### **4. The Nigerian Context**

Contextualising democratization and corruption in the Nigerian society, several forces are seriously militating against the democratization crusade. When one considers the attitudes taken by all the major stakeholders like governments, unions, businesses, the industrial commission, the churches, the mosque, lobby groups and individuals, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that no sincere effort goes into improving the lot of the masses vis-à-vis the body politic. It is a known fact that there are many lacunas in the Nigerian democratic system. Furthermore, the turns and twists in the democratization crusade are in the strength or weakness of the people vis-à-vis corruption. The Nigerian nation seems to have supported Hutchful's assertion that "the

success or otherwise of democratic transitions seems to be relatively independent of the democracy in the continent." This assertion is traceable to what is perceived as the decline in the pace and depth of democratization to corruption in the polity.

Tracing the memory lane, democratization crusade in Nigeria has been in existence since the colonial masters had relinquished powers to the natives. From 1960 till date, it is unfortunate that all promising transition programmes embarked upon by successive military regimes have all failed to bring about democratic sustenance and continuity. Hence, such transitions have been thwarted by the military at the crucial stages as a result of many reasons such as corruption and political instability. But corruption is always the major reason. It should however be established that political transitions in Nigeria have simply been a transition from authoritarian military regimes to democratically civilian regimes. "These transitions have been endless, ill-designed and in all cases derailed by the military cabals at critical stages of implementation." The exceptions in this case are probably the Muritala/Obasanjo's military regimes of 1975-79 and Abdulsalami Abubakar's military regime of 1998-99.

As earlier observed, beginning from 1960 since the colonizers had evacuated the Nigerian nation, "the virus of corruption has already found its way in our body-politic. Here, election rigging resulting to massive destruction of property and lives forced the military to intervene in the political governance of the country." It is therefore evident from the above that corruption was the major bane that truncated the first republic and corrupt practices became incorporated into politics. Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi who assumed leadership supported the fact that *one of the reasons why the military terminated the life of the first republic was corruption. However, the regime declared its intention to stamp out corruption from our public life, which was never done until Gowon appeared on the scene.*

However, during the military tenure of Gowon, he promised to quit governance in 1976, but he

was so pressurized by some of his extremely corrupt accolades that he had to recant from that initial promise.

Muritala/Obasanjo's military regime purged and punished severely corrupt officers in the country. But this experience was later ignored when ten-percenters and the graft-masters became the movers and shakers of the Nigerian society. Nigeria again relapsed after Muritala's attempt was silent in death, thus plunging the Nigerian nation deep down into the basement of rot.

Despite "Shagari establishment of a code of conduct Bureau and a code of conduct Tribunal...his Second Republic administration would for long, represent one of the most corrupt and most graft stricken periods, where politicians, public officers and law makers succeeded in elevating profligacy and public treasury looting to an art form"<sup>33</sup> Thus, the democratization process kick-started was not sustained because of the corrupt leaders. The Second Republic leaders fleeced the nation so massively that it bothered on probity. Some political leaders in this republic had the flair for corrupt tendencies.

*They breakfasted in London, lunched in Madrid and dined in Lisbon.*

*While the Nigerian Naira nose-dived in worth, they coursed their path to the vaults of the Swiss and became notorious for stashing stolen money abroad....Therefore, the political corruption centre seems not able to hold.*

*Subsequently, government gave fillip to the bug.*

The above revealed the extent of corruption during the second republic. This was however the major reason for truncating this period under review. This resulted in democratic breakdown, and the democratic consolidating fillip was thrown to the bug. The self-seeking and self-serving disposition of Nigerian political elites and opportunists were apparent in the second republic. Their shoddy deals dismissed the regime from being democratically consolidated by Buhari and Idiagbon military regime of 1983-85.

Babangida came in, and as if in sympathy with corrupt politicians locked up by the Buhari regime, reviewed their issues. It must be noted that Babangida tenure at no point in time of the history of that regime, ever preached against corruption.<sup>35</sup> In a nutshell, during the Babangida government, corruption became "institutionalised" as opportunities for stealing were almost limitless and the temptation irresistible. Thus, the words of Aluko are apposite here;

*When a nation gives its rule to the military, that nation is finished.*

*When a soldier captures a city, he loots it, when a soldier captures a country, what do you expect? He loots it.*

Aluko emphasizes that military leaders do not spare any country they hijack and they never wish such country well. And so, corruption became a full-blown cancer during Babangida administration. Things were not further helped by the nose-diving economy when it was obvious perhaps that Nigeria was scooping up extra dollars from international market. The gulf oil windfall was a case in point.

In spite of the "institutionalisation" of corruption during Babangida era, many thought that by so doing democracy would be entrenched as he introduced vibrant and brilliant democratic transition programmes. At the end, Nigeria was faced with the annulment of June 12 1993 election adjudged to be the freest and fairest election ever held in Nigeria. Thus, the journey of transition to civilian regimes came to fizzle out immediately the annulment was stamped, sealed and delivered. However, the annulment generated unprecedented reactions which were not favourable and have the potential of destroying the very corporate existence of the Nigerian nation. Thus, the Nigerian people suffered the annulment "in the form of economic paralysis, political apathy, social industrial unrest and more recently the call for the restructuring of the armed forces, police and other governmental institutions/agencies and the rotation of the office of the president among the six major geo-political zones in the country"<sup>38</sup> To this end, Babangida "stepped aside" by

hurriedly introducing interim National government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan.

Shonekan's ill-fated adventurism as a "child of circumstance" into politics only recounted of his dream against corruption, of which before he had time to settle down for business in which he was absolutely unsuitable,<sup>39</sup> Abacha with "a gun on the head" approach terminated his interim government. Abacha with his own agenda became a dictator or tyrant in Nigeria. "Abacha can easily pass as the world champion grafter of the century, after the order of the former Zairean dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, who until his overthrow, had plundered his country's treasury to the extent of perhaps more than \$1 billion during the 32 years he mis-ruled and bankrupted his country."<sup>40</sup> Abacha's enthronement was to perforate the till. It is customary with the military Junta that overnight millionaires are made through inflated contract, outright diversion of public funds, allocation of choice oil blocs and fraudulent allocations of money under the pretext of officialdom and democratic transitions. It thereafter became clear after the death of Abacha that he was the chief presiding officer over the flinch. Abacha as the Governor of CBN brazenly raided the Central Bank, using the CBN bullion vans and CBN top officials to execute the several raids.<sup>41</sup> He died with his five leprous political parties he floated all in the guise of democratic transition.

Corruption has since remained unabated in the polity. The Abdulsalami Abubakar's junta is yet battling with charges of having aided itself to colossal billions of Nigerian Naira. In fact, the alarming corrupt practices in Abubakar's junta had elicited surprise from insiders. The financial recklessness was more scandalous than Abacha's financial fraud.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, people who thought Abubakar was a simple naïve man, were shocked to find out that he suffers from this inferiority syndrome that Abacha had, which made him wanted to surpass everyone with his acquisitive tendencies. In sum, his administration was inveterate in looting with the shortest period the administration lasted before the advent of nascent democracy. The basic reason while people decided to let go was the fact that Nigerians were tired of military regimes

and the mental torture they experienced in the military era. All these and other reasons made the people to down play the financial recklessness during this period. However, the democracy he enthroned is still being sustained by the current civilian government. Those who thought that, with the enthronement of democracy, corruption would become a thing of the past were disappointed. The masses of the people could not but express disappointment and chagrin at the massive theft in high and low places going on.<sup>43</sup> While local and state governments literally sit in court over monthly allocations, the governors too are busy building castles in the air and replicating the odious theft of the past regimes. In other words, corruption and its choking grip are common among cabinet ministers, legislators, governors, chairmen, councillors who are plundering the nation, competing to outdo one another in the art of cornering Nigerian wealth. In fact, Nigeria as a nation is stinkingly rich, and she is the richest country perhaps in the world. Despite the money stashed away and the ones still flying with wings, she is still rich and has money in foreign reserve. If what is happening to Nigeria in every successive regime had happened to U S, U S would have run aground long ago; yet Nigeria is still moving despite the problems of corruption.

Nigeria is rather very unfortunate as a country in spite of the fact that Obasanjo had said among others during his inaugural speech that corruption *must not be condoned. This is why laws are made and enforced to check corruption, so that society would survive and develop in an orderly, reasonable and predictable way. No society can achieve anything near its full potential if it allows corruption to become the full-blown cancer it has become in Nigeria. One of the greatest tragedies of military rules in recent times, is that corruption was allowed to grow unchallenged and unchecked.*

This speech led to the anti-corruption bill sent to National Assembly after his inauguration. The results of this were the establishments of Independent Corrupt Practices Commission and other Related Matters (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) and among others.

These various commissions started off well, indicting and arresting serving governors, public personnels and former corrupt leaders and their cronies, i.e. Chief Diepreye Alamiesigha, late Abacha's family and the Swiss bank phenomenon.

Today, these commissions are being accused of being one-sided, targeting opponents in the Obasanjo's government, and they are also accused of living above their means. Presently, many allegations of theft are prevalent in Obasanjo regime even before he left power. However, his government successfully relinquished power to Yar, Adua in May 29 2007.

Since the ascendancy of Yar, Adua into power, it has been the era of probe in the national assembly of various embezzlements that took place during Obasanjo era and this present government, i.e., the impeachment of the former speaker of the House of Representatives, Mrs. Patricia Etteh, and the Minister of Health; all linked to various embezzlements and graft of different kinds. All these corrupt practices are antithetical to democratization crusade in the Nigerian polity. With the sudden death of Yar' Adua, the process of curbing or tackling corruption and enhancing the rule of law became thwarted. His Vice-President, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan de facto and de jure became the President and he unresistingly promoted corruption and branded it 'petty stealing'. He was voted out through 2015 election. The current government headed by Buhari is surrounded by corrupt adjutants who sponsored his electioneering campaign and they are recovering their money from the government treasury.

The concept of democratic breakdown or erosion is too familiar with Nigeria, because corruption has been elevated to the status of gold and adorned purple as a carnival without rules and limitations. Everywhere, one wonders if "corruption is not a Nigerian"<sup>45</sup> Corruption in Nigeria soars like fern in the open field. The grave implication is that democratic transition and consolidation aimed at democratization in Nigeria, is shaking, because the electors and

some electorates are simply pursuing self-seeking and parochial interest all in the name of corruption. This democratization process seems not to be registered in the consciousness, discourse or agenda of the politically attentive and active public. Oche argues that:

*The dangers and possibility of democratic erosion, which may have already started, and breakdown, seem to have entirely discounted. The avaricious and self-serving disposition of Nigeria's political class has been apparent within the past one and half years.*

To this end, Nigeria is democratising in corruption and legislating in extravagance instead of guiding jealously the hard-worn democracy from the military dictatorship. Broadly speaking, democracy suffers when the rulers embark on a mission of shameful extravagance in which money; sex, power and material acquisition are key elements of some of them. The foregoing reveals that democratization and corruption are arch-enemies, unmashed and unholy bedfellows. In fact, they are incomparable fellows and cannot work together. As a result of the pride of place corruption assumes in Nigeria, it will be difficult for democracy to thrive in this thorny terrain. Except, corruption gives way to democracy to soar or democracy gives in to corruption so that democracy can be forgotten at a glance. With this at hand, one is quick to ask the following:

- Are Nigerians psychologically prepared for democracy, let alone democratic consolidation;
- What brand of democracy do they want? And
- How do we reconcile democracy and corruption in the Nigerian polity?

These and others would be treated in our recommendations.

## 5. Recommendations

Without fuss, Nigeria is democratising in corruption and legislating in extravagance, which is dangerous having weighed its pros and cons. To this extent, it shows that this hard-worn democracy that is being democratically

consolidated, having succeeded in transiting from civilian to civilian regime for the first, is beset by corrupt practices. It therefore appears that Nigerians are not psychologically prepared for democratization project. If not, the issue of corruption would have not pervaded the political economy. Despite the zero tolerance for corruption, the nation is still battling with cases of corrupt leaders. Ogbonnaya and Ofoeze are of the opinion that “such impression and its actualization in a democratic order remain undemocratic, it could lead those in custody of the regime being democratised to take steps aimed at forestalling that possibility.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore, it is advocated that viable mechanisms should be built into the democratization process in order to safeguard this nascent democracy that emerged after much tunnel. This fact should be recognised on the basis of widespread hardship foisted on the masses by long years of military regime as well as the fresh memories of crucibles Nigerians have suffered. The people should learn from history and be schooled in the art of democratization and its implication on Nigerian society.

Like Africa, Nigeria is familiar with the problems of communal, ethnic and religious affiliations as basis for power sharing and solutions to some challenges. But democracy is all about individualism. Therefore, Nigerians should live beyond ethnic, religious and communal affiliations to individualism in order to sustain and protect democracy. Democracy is not a commodity purchased from the market, rather, it is fought for and won by the local groups that desire it.<sup>48</sup> Nigeria, regardless of these affiliations, should not allow themselves to be trumpeted into premature democratization. This is because like development, democratization is not something that people do for another, people must do it for themselves or it does not happen.

Under democratization process, Nigerians should transcend marginalisation, political clique, self-interest and so on. Democracy can only thrive in an atmosphere that is politically friendly. Like Rustow argues that, “no two existing democracies have gone through a

struggle between the very same forces over the same issues and with the same outcomes”. Instead of the democratisation process promoting dialogue, participation and reducing the scope for political instability, corruption and social-economic conflicts, it is producing a regime of politically marginalized and highly discontented populace with negative implications for military intervention.

Cohen observes that democracy is that system of community government in which the members of the community participate in the making of the decisions which affect them. However, the only challenge in respect of this observation is that equality and direct participation as the core of democracy renders it unpracticable in contemporary society. We submit that since like Africa, Nigerians are known for communal life, communal democratic development should be practised. Because without communitarian relative democracy, there is no identity for African perhaps Nigerian person. Only together with others can one become a complete human person and achieve individual freedom which is the core of democracy that again should be exercised in a democratic communitarian manner. In fact, the communal structures cannot elude the reality and quality of self-assertiveness which individuals show through their political actions. It is this capacity to assert oneself in the community that makes possible the intelligibility of an individual’s autonomous choices of goals and plans for common life.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, I advocate that Nigerians should embrace communal democracy so that community members participate in the process of decision-making that affect them other than having representatives that seek for their common end instead of the people that send them to represent their interest. Nigerians should re-examine the meaning of communal existence and to re-appraise the democratic virtues upon which our socio-economic and political structures are based.

It is clear that democratization and corruption together cannot help Nigeria because they are incompatible. Therefore, the people should totally embrace genuine democratization of the polity and economy. The masses at the grassroots should enjoy greater democratic

power over their electorates. As a result, the masses at the grassroots should have greater resources to enhance the performance of their activities and strengthen their accountability. Thus, this can be possible when the masses are more popular than the political clique or political “godfathers” who for no other reason save for their interest impose candidates for the people. If the masses of the people make imposition of candidates correspondingly irrelevant, the issue of corruption in the polity will evaporate with time. This will give room for a communal broad-based government. This awareness will educate the citizenry on the importance and benefits of democracy, and the negative implications of corruption on democracy.

Not only that, all the agencies recruited to tackle corruption in Nigeria should be strongly encouraged, empowered, and remained independent in their assignment without interference, and the government should, as a matter of strong commitment and dedication, punish corrupt officials regardless of the antics of their collaborators. The issue of zero tolerance on corruption should not be seen as a “traitor” rather faithfully executed and internalised like “Caesar’s wives” who lived above board. Phillips quickly adds that “accomplishing goals that are important, for society as well as for ourselves, building something that has permanence and value beyond personal or strictly corporate objectives, should be at least as important as the imperatives of the bottom line.”<sup>54</sup> Therefore, the aforementioned suggestions would definitely build a democratic order that can be effective, and capable of stamping out corruption with a view to consolidating and making every democratic regime in Nigeria as the exact symbol of her people.

#### Conclusion

From our effort so far, it is discovered that democratization and corruption are unholy and incompatible bed-fellows. The paper has thus revealed that in the democratic effort in Nigeria, corruption has been the major bane that had and has crumbled all the democratization structures in the polity. Of a truth, Nigeria is seen to be democratizing in corruption and legislating in

extravagance instead of guiding religiously the hard-won democracy from the military dictatorships. Consequently, it will be knotty for democracy to thrive in this thorny terrain of corruption. This problem needs to be addressed, not redefined and attention needs to be focused, not diverted. The various games and circuses promoted by each successive regime have continued to make corruption soaring in an alarming proportion. Perhaps, democratization as a democratic institution aimed at furthering political conscientisation processes propelled by the political regimes should not be a monumental waste as a result of corruption. Nigerians must in fact and indeed internalise zero tolerance to corruption, and give Nigeria a democratic soul, develop for it a political virtue and a direction to follow, away from the false and ephemeral lip-service paid to anti-corruption crusade since the successive regimes. To this end, the attainment of a corrupt-free society in Nigeria though is an uphill and Herculean task, but it would afford leadership of strong will, purpose, dedication and respecter of the rule of law who must use all state apparatus to entrench and impose it on the populace.

These set objectives are not options to select rather they are matters for the *polis* through the normal democratic processes to help fostering the corporate existence of the Nigerian nation. This will aid democratization project to grow and build domestic political consensus, full individual and collective participation and assuming new roles capable of keeping with the demands of the times. This and others will extend the life span of democracy and make it immune against the threat of incursion of military regime and stem the tide of possible democratic breakdown. Finally, communal democracy is suitable for Nigeria because of her communal background and with this at hand; democratization will be “the only game in town”.

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