



## **Theoretical Perspectives and the Challenges of Corruption in Nigerian Democracy**

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### **Abstract**

This study is premised on analyzing the relationship between democracy and corruption, and how it shaped the Nigerian state. In the past studies on democracy and corruption, analyst in most models, assume a linear relationship, where the advent of democracy is expected to reduce the level of corruption in a country. Other models assume non-linear relationship, which were based on the assumptions that democracy can only reduce corruption at an advanced stage of political development. The premise of both linear and non-linear model hypotheses offers an insightful information in discussing the casual relationship between democracy and corruption, however their methods and sampling techniques are inadequate and inconclusive on how to theoretically explain issues posed by this relationship. Notwithstanding, some of the recent studies on democracy and corruption focused on conditional hypothesis which assumed a U-effect relationship between democracy and corruption. It suggested that corruption occur at an early stage of democratization with low per capita income. This study synthesizes across these propositions and suggest that, to explain the casual relationship and the effect between democracy and corruption in a country, it is important to explicitly analyze some of the quasi endogenous political factors which are inherent in explaining political outcomes. This study examines these endogenous factors as implicit to uniform practices found in the measurement of democratic principles. Thus, it argues that political culture and political institution controlled in a case study analytic approach such as Nigeria will provide enough theoretical explanations on the relationship between democracy and corruption. Thus, it will argue that weak political institutions established through culture of corruption cannot produce efficiency and accountability, irrespective of democratic longevity. The debates and challenges of corruption in Nigeria's democracy will further demonstrate that democratic institutions which did not emerge through a systematic political culture will produce political outcome that are favourable to corrupt opportunities.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Corruption, Political Institutions, Political Culture

### **Introduction**

Is democracy vulnerable to corruption? The answer to this question may be contestable. Take for example the perspective shared from the two theories of democracy and corruption. On the one hand are theories that explained the relationship between democracy and corruption. For instance, the two most notable among the theories are, linear and non-linear model theory. The linear model theory proponents argued that democracy is not vulnerable to corruption, instead it has a negative effect on corruption. Example, Morris (2009) argued that democratic values like accountability through checks and balances, transparency, equality, justice, and freedom are antithetical to corruption. Ades and Di Tella (1998) argued that lack of political and civil rights is positively associated with corruption. Triesman (2000) finds that the democratic consolidation, defined in terms of duration or the number of uninterrupted years in which a

country consistently practiced democracy, reduces corruption. While non-linear model proponents suggested that democracy is vulnerable to corruption only at an early, but reduces corruption overtime or at an advanced stage. Examples to this theory include, Huntington (1968), who argued that advancement to democracy in modern societies creates normatively ideological confusion, first, by creating frequent platforms for writing new laws; second, introducing new sources for wealth and power; third, creating an interim opportunities for public officials to abuse power and engage in corrupt activities. In addition, Mungiu Pippidi (2006) explained that democratization process leads to introduction of political competition which breaks the elite monopoly of power from the polar opposite. This allows the new elite groups to compete for state rents, and increases competitive particularism which exacerbates corruption. Bäck and Hadenius (2008) argued that there's lack of checks and balances at an early stage of democratization which creates incentives for corrupt activities. Similarly, Pellegate (2012) finds that at an early stage of democratic transition, the mechanisms for electoral control are weak and not adequate to effectively create systems for accountability, hence nourishes corrupt activities. These results and the evidence it provided may have not fully inspired confidence on how democracy and corruption relates since most of its outcomes are inconsistent with the growing number of cases that indicates corruption rises in democracies.

On the other hand, are the analysis from the case evidences of corruption in democracies, which suggest that democracy and corruption cohabits both structurally and institutionally. Rock (2007) empirically tested evidence of corruption case in democracies, and found a significant support for inverted U relationship between democracy and corruption. Inverted U relationship suggested that corruption rises with democracy and then declines.

In addition, (Rock, 2007) observed that democracy defined in terms of government effectiveness and adherence to the rule of law were found to reduce corruption. Mohtadi and Roe (2003) also tested case evidence of corruption in Indonesian democracy, and arrived at inverted U relationship between the durability of new democracies and corruption. Corruption in (Mohtadi and Roe, 2003) perspective was explained in terms of a monopolistic competitive behavior of private sector agents who invested in rent-seeking cooperation (government). Mohtadi and Roe (2003) argued that corrupt activities develops alongside democratic transition since they suffer insufficient checks and balances, and lacks transparency at the developing stage.

In addition, analyst of third wave democratization process like: Huntington (1991), Foweraker and Landman (2002), Lindberg (2006), Palmer (2008), Choi (2016), utilized case-evidence corruption theory to measure the level of democracy in a country. Consequently, the discussions on democracy and corruption shifted from transitional arguments to analysis focusing on determinants of democracy. For instance, Foweraker and Landman (2002) identified three determinants used in measuring democracy, regime endurance, government efficiency, and quality of government. Hence, corruption was used as one of the predictors of democratic assessment. For instance, Rose-Ackerman (1999) argued that corruption is a symptom that something has gone wrong in the management of the state. This view opens corruption as a disease to democracy, which according to Warren (2004) is a deficit to democracy.

In the frame of third wave democratization, analysts opinion on the relationship between democracy and corruption suggests that, democracy has only grown to become complacent with corruption since it adjudges itself as sanctimonious over other regimes. For example, Nigerian state despite its claim to democracy has become a victim of high-level of corruption (Ogundiya 2009; Yagboyaju 2008; Muhammed et al. 2019).

Therefore, it is in the scheme of right thinking to consider Nigerian democracy as an interested party on the discussions regarding case-evidence of corruption among democracies. This is because the hope and aspiration which accompanied Nigeria's successful democratization in 1999, seems to have been squandered on the altar of mismanagement of state resources 23 years after the process was accomplished. The burgeoning literature which seek to explain Nigeria's governance predicaments are replete with multiple social indicators. However, this article will consider corruption as an important predictor of democratic challenges in Nigeria. Whence it studies the undercurrent variables like; political institution and political culture, which are implicit to democratic compromise in Nigeria. Corruption in this context will be defined as abuse of power by those with the privileges of public trust. Also it will be explained in line with Theobald (1990), where corruption was conceived as perversion or destruction of integrity in the discharge of public duties by either bribery or favour. This stream of meaning from various

literature will be used to delineate the predicaments of democratic governance in Nigeria, and its effects on other social indicators pointed out in different studies.

The rest of the paper is divided into three sections. In the first section, I will explain concepts that are central to the analysis like democracy and corruption. The second section will discuss the determinants and causes of corruption in Nigeria's democracy. Third section will discuss the impact of corruption in Nigeria's democracy, followed by conclusion and recommendation.

### **Theoretical Analysis of Concepts**

The two main concepts that will be theoretically analyzed in this study are, democracy and corruption. Other concepts such as political institution, political culture, and good governance which are under threat by corruption in Nigeria, will also be closely analyzed.

### **What is democracy?**

Democracy has been defined in different ways by lots of scholars. Although, there is not yet a generally accepted definition of democracy. However, the burgeoning literature on the meaning of democracy is replete with variety of opposing views and debates as to how democracy is best expressed. For instance, according to Roskin et. al. (2003) the term democracy has divergent meaning at the same time. Whereas, Schweinitz (1964) suggested that democracy means all things to all people. Saward (2003) argued that democracy means different things to different people. These opposing views on the definition of democracy suggests that scholars approach on the meaning of democracy are either based on individual theoretical perspective, or largely dependent on the so-called 'research-diplomacy' where meaning of concepts are defined to sought the interest of the researcher. For instance, Birch (2007) pointed out that it is not possible to arrive at a universally accepted definition of democracy by simply explaining the intrinsic meaning of the term, instead there are two conditions under which democracy can be explained. First, democracy can be explained by observing the political exercise and its common application. Second, democracy can be explained by pointing out democratic ideals and subsequently measure the extent of its practical implication.

To reconcile this controversy, Brick (2002) proposed two categories on how democracy maybe defined. First, democracy maybe defined as a set of values or principles which guides the conduct of human relation through politics. Second, democracy maybe defined as a set of institutional arrangements which regulate human conduct through politics. This dual approach on the definition of democracy was earlier used by (Beetham,1999), when he explained that democracy is both descriptive and prescriptive. According to Beetham (1999), the descriptive conception of democracy deals with the institutional structure or procedure of political arrangement in the governance of the state. Whereas, the prescriptive approach of democracy deals with the normative ideals which focuses on how behaviors are regulated through politics. Although, Beetham emphasized the importance of institutional analysis in democracy, however, he acknowledged that institutional procedures alone without regulative principles are incoherent, thus principles on their own are barren without procedures.

The debate on what is democracy can go ad infinitum. Hence, this article is posed on extracting the relevant explanatory information on the meaning of democracy which are useful to the context of this study. In that sense, etymologically, democracy originated from two Ancient Greek word, *demos* meaning 'the people' and *kratein* meaning 'to rule'. Thus, *demokratia* or democracy means rule by the people (Harrison and Boyd, 2018).

It is important to note that, over the period of history, both the meaning and practice of democracy has undergone several changes, many of which include a transformation of democracy from the practice of gathering in a small city-state by all qualified citizens to debate the affairs of the state, (direct democracy) to a more gigantic government involving the indirect participation of citizens through representation (representative democracy). Following this approach, Harrison and Boyd (2018) defined democracy as a "popular government, or representative government, or participation in government, or republican government, or some overlap between some of all these" (2018:60). This latest approach is often classified as modern democracy, which in some senses described as liberal democracy. Some of these recent developments in democracy and democratic transformation has overtime been captured by political scientist. Perhaps, some of the most relevant definitions of democracy has been extensively explained among political science theories. For example; The minimalist defined democracy from institutional perspective and contend that democracy is best described as an

institutional arrangement where citizens express their preferences of leadership through elections (Schimpeter, 1950; Lipset, 1959; Lindberg, 2006; Kekic, 2007; Diamond, 2008; Palmer, 2008). For instance, Lipset (1959) defined democracy as a political system that provides regular opportunities through constitutional provisions for changing governing officials. Similarly, Kekic (2007) affirmed the institutional approach on democracy, by pointing out that at a minimum the basic attributes of a democracy include the existence of free and fair elections, protection of human rights, a government whose decision is based on majority rule, and as well as the consent of the governed. In line with this, Diamond (2008) argued that democracy has come to mean a political system which allows individual to acquire political will through that competitive engagement in the form of elections in obtaining people's mandate for making political decisions.

Other broader definitions like, (Dahl, 1971) added conditions necessary for preferences to be effectively formulated and fairly weighted in expression and decisions like, civil liberties such as freedom of expression. Grugel (2002) defined democracy as a political system of political bargaining that allows the process of decision making and policy formulation on how the people exercises political rights, as well as political arrangement that guarantees the people equal rights in participating in the process of decision making.

Similarly, Harrison and Boyd (2018) defined democracy to mean popular government, representative government, participatory government, republican government or an overlap among some or all of these identified governments. Harrison and Boyd simplified democracy into two forms; defensive democracy and citizen democracy. While the former defined democracy as the means through which citizens are protected from an oppressive state. The later defined democracy as a political system that advances the rights of citizens in participating actively in the process of decision making.

Kolstad and Wiig (2011) characterized democracy as various forms of government accountability. They identified two forms of accountability, which are vertical and horizontal accountability. Vertical accountability explains the accountability of government to the people through elections. Whereas, horizontal accountability explains checks and balances within the government.

The views from these perspective on democracy explains four main concepts that are cardinal to the early antecedents of democracy in the Greek city-states, which were taught to have literally mean, rule of the people (Direct democracy). The concepts include, equity, accountability, civil liberties and active participation in the process of decision making. It also formed the foundation principles of what is now practiced as modern or liberal democracy. For instance, other views summed up democracy as both system and structures of governance through a well-organized political arrangements in the form of institution of elected officials and the governed (indirect democracy).

Democracy and other traditional types of government may be classified under broad system of governance, which (Collier 1982) defined as activities of those occupying public office, who have the responsibilities of making binding decisions at any given time for the interest of the people. In same sense, Olowu (1999) argued that governance can be described as a set of norms used to appraise governmental systems and prescribe the most acceptable practice in which power is utilized. In more recent times, democracy has become synonymous with governance. This is because democracy has been seen or perceived as the best form of government because of its openness to people participation and public accountability.

While democracy and governance seems inseparable in the advanced democracies of the developed world, democratization in the developing countries, especially in Nigeria, are not totally free from bad governance. For instance, if democracy must be equated with good governance, it must entail the capacity of the state to function effectively in the service of the public (Fadakinte 2008). By so doing, the state must be transparent in its activities, which includes, transparency on how government conduct its businesses, makes decisions, and spends public funds. However, these factors seems to be missing in the way democracy is practiced in Nigeria. Let it be known for instance, that most scholarly works on democracy in Nigeria, including, Lewis (1965), Sklar (1966), Dudley (1973), Ekeh (1975), Yagboyaju (2011) and several others have all sort to explain the country's predicament and why democracy is in relapse. Several factors were raised including multi ethnic character of the country, resource curse, religious fragmentation, and other salience negative factors. But of recent, there's a

burgeoning consciousness on interrogating political factors such as corruption as one of the main pramordial of bad governance in Nigeria.

This article in the following paragraphs will further interrogate corruption as a bane to democratization in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, like many other modern democracies, the latter system of democracy which represents the liberal or representative democracy, is therefore considered the most dominant model. The common feature among this model of democracy include, rule of law, accountability, transparency, periodic elections, constitution, and civil liberties. It is important to note that democracy has up to now been accepted as the best system of government. Thus expectations are high among Nigerian citizens who have been earnestly waiting for the promises of good governance promised them more than two decades ago

### **What do we know about corruption?**

The term corruption has become a buzzword both in private and public discussions perhaps does not seem to lack meaning. In a general sense, it is a word whose meaning often negates positive moral behavior. Therefore, corruption can be explained from the notion of an immoral behavior. That is, a behavior or human actions that lacks the requirements of a defined moral principles or conducts. These sets of behavior can take place both in government and in private sector. Let's take for example the words of Heymann (1996: p325), when he defined "corruption as secretly receiving private benefits to influence a decision that is supposed to be made in the interest of others and unaffected by private benefits. This is not solely a government problem. For instance, a purchasing agent of a cooperation may also be acting corrupt by demanding kickbacks to influence his purchasing decision. In this article, our interest on corruption is concerned primarily with corrupt activities within the government and in extension by democracies.

According to Oxford English Dictionary, corruption is defined as a dishonest or illegal behavior, especially of people in authority. Additionally, Nye (1967) defined "corruption as a behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public rules because of private regarding; personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or status gains or violates against the existence of certain types of private regarding influence" (1967: p419). Theobald (1990) also defined corruption as perversion or destruction of integrity in the discharge of public duties by bribery or favor. Similarly, Kolstad and Wiig (2011) argued that the standard definition of corruption is the "abuse of public office for private gains, or abuse of entrusted power for private gain" (2011: p3).

Other resourceful institutional organizations like Asian Development Bank (1998), World bank (1999), United Nations (2004), and Transparency International (2011) have all defined corruption as abuse of public or private office for private gains. In addition, Brown and Cloke (2004) was quick to point out that the definition of corruption has become too public office rendered thus makes it limited. It is their view that some of the private individual gains from corruption are not entirely induced by personal or monetary interest. for instance, abuse of political position can be done in a way that subverts the agenda of government through imposition of ideologies that represent group interest. It is reasonable to admit that the meaning of corruption is broad, and at the same time applicatory.

This article prefers the meaning of corruption which deals with the underlying factors on abuse of public office and subversion of public interest for personal or group gains. While a number of corruption indices exist, this article will employ 7 most commonly used indices in the previous studies on corruption. This capture primarily bribery, lobbying, misappropriation, embezzlement, electoral fraud, nepotism, cronyism, and patronage. So strictly speaking we expect the effect of these forms of corruption on democracy in Nigeria.

Bribery is the most commonly used term when referring to corruption. Etymologically, the term bribery originated from 1540's French word *briberie*, which was used to explain the "act of magistrate taking money for corrupted services" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2022). Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defined bribe as a "sum of money or something valuable that you give or offer to somebody to persuade them to help you, especially by doing something dishonest" (Oxford Learner's Dictionary Online, 1995). Similarly, Nye (1967) defined bribery as the use of reward to pervert the judgement of a person in a position of trust. In a simple way, bribery is an illegal transaction between parties with the intention of subverting due process or merit for self-aggrandizement.

Lobbying as a form of corruption is culturally relative. That is, it may mean corruption in one political culture, and mean a legal political tool in another. Lobbying is an attempt to influence a legislator or other public official on an issue of interest. Rose-Ackerman (1978) identified lobbying as an advanced form of corruption in democracy. In her analysis, she explained that lobbying occur as a process of influencing by either interest groups or individual seeking to pressurize an elected official to represent their interest. The influence come as campaign financing, agent payment, or party package which allows the political office holder to have easy access to re-election. In advanced democracies like the United States of America, lobbying is not considered as corruption. However, in some other political cultures like Nigeria, it is an act of corruption. Since the primary motive of the actors it to divert the program of government to their interest, which in turn distorts the agenda of public interest.

Embezzlement/Misappropriation is the most common system of corruption by political office holders. It is the process of diverting or converting public resources for private gain. Inge Amundsen (2006) explained that embezzlement involves the systematic abuse of power by the ruling elites as a means of extraction and accumulation of public resources into their individual or group interest.

Electoral fraud is a form of corruption widely used by corrupt politicians who are desperate for power. It involves the illegal interference with the electoral process of an election in such a way that it suites the interest of the actor or actors. Electoral fraud may take different process which includes, election rigging, ballot box stuffing, vote buying, annulment of unfavorable election results, and electoral violence.

Nepotism is a form of political corruption which occur as an abuse of political processes. It is a process of corrupt system where those in the position of power prefers or favor's their relatives especially by giving them jobs.

Cronyism is a process of corrupt practices where those in the position of political power appoints their friends or cliques into public office regardless of their qualification for the position. This type of corruption is common among politicians.

Patronage is the act of making appointments or awarding contracts as a way of patronizing political associates. When party loyalist who are incompetent are selected just because they support the government, or when selections are made along ethnic identity line in the case of favoring one group against the other, it could be considered as political corruption.

According to Aktan (2015), one of the common feature of these forms of corruption is that it violates the contemporary laws, ethics, and the norms of the society. Thus, the outcome of its consequences is undermining trust, and effectiveness of governance which weakens political institution. Outside the moral definition of corruption, the central argument that unifies debates on corruption is the illegality of a behavior engaged by person of trust, which violates required code of conduct. In this instance, we shall examine some of the contending debates on causes of corruption.

What Causes Corruption?

What motivates officials acting corruptly? The answer to this question may not be obvious among theories on corruption. Lets examine three existing proposals across literature on the causes of corruption.

First proposal on the probable cause of corruption deals with economic approach. This approach was exemplified largely by economist theorists whose analysis were based on an optimistic view, that a controlled bureaucratic privileges through labor competition will lessen corruption. In this perspective, the economists believed that it is hard to imagine the incidence of corruption in a perfect competitive bureaucratic institutions. Hence, if bureaucratic responsibilities are distributed across boards, especially among departments with equal and competitive responsibilities, it will minimize corrupt activities. For instance, Rose-Ackerman (1978) in her principle of overlapping jurisdiction, explained how competition puts pressure on corrupt bureaucracy. She explained that, if there are correspondence in bureaucratic institutions, introduction of competition will allow applicants to reapply in other departments whenever they are asked for bribes by corrupt officials. If the cost of the application is low enough, the existence of some honest officials will drive down corruption to zero. Ades and Di Tilla (1995) also supported this argument when they controlled the level of development and the degree of political competition. They found out that corruption is higher in countries with a protected domestic economy with high tariff against foreign competition. They argue that it is the bureaucratic influence that creates bottle necks for market structures thereby exacting bribes

for easy passage of foreign trades. Other areas of economic approach deals with the financial benefits that corrupt public officials is expected to gain. Greed is also an economic motivating factor for public officials to engage in corruption. In this case, when public officials live a lavish lifestyle, especially above their earnings, it attracts opportunities for corrupt activities at the cause doing his/her duty (see, Treisman 2000). Another perspective on economic approach is based on the view that, a more economically developed country have lesser opportunity for corrupt activities. For instance, Lipset (1959) argued that economic development increases the spread of education and literacy, and depersonalized relationship both of which raises the odds of awareness against abuse of public office.

Second proposal on the possible cause of corruption had to deal with the legal system of a country. This perspective points to the fact that, the structure of a country's legal system determines the level of corruption. Hence, countries with weak legal system produces opportunity for corrupt activities. Treisman (2000) pointed out that the probability of getting caught in corrupt act depends largely on the effectiveness of the country's legal system. In this case, an effective legal system produces a deterrence mechanism that increases the probability of detection, apprehension and conviction of a corrupt behavior.(Ades and Di Tella, 1996). Treisman (2000) identified two aspect of the legal system that either causes or minimizes corruption in a country. First, the degree of protection and resources it offers to private property owners affected by corruption. He pointed out that the differences on legal system are traceable to the historical background of the country's legal system. He argued that countries that its legal historical background are based on common law are more effective in reducing corruption, as against countries that are based on civil law. Second, legal culture. Treisman (2000) noted that the differences in country's legal system are not only based on formulation and intent of the law but also based on the procedures and enforcement of the law. In this perspective, legal culture was used to refer social role and the relative importance of the law in preserving social order. He compared the legal procedure of the British who practices a complete adherence to the procedures of the law to other countries that adherence of the law is based on hierarchy and respect to authority. In the later regard, the law is much lenient with people of higher authority compared to those of ordinary citizens. Therefore, in Treisman perspective, countries whose legal system adhere to fully to both procedures and enforcement of the law will experience less cases of corruption.

Third proposal on the possible causes of corruption deal with institutional approach. A number of studies suggested that the nature of political institutions in a country influences the risk of exposure to corrupt activities. Diamond and Plattner (1993) suggested that there are lesser incentives for corruption in a more democratic and open political system. Putnam (1993) also suggest that freedom of information, freedom of association, and civil rights engenders greater civic responsibilities, which may lead to closer monitoring of public officials and create risk of exposure. Other studies like Triesman (2002), Fisman & Gatti (2002), Warren (2004), Pellegata (2012), Acemoglu & Robison (2013) all concluded that weak political institutions characterized by mismanagement, abuse of institutional norms, and unaccountability is a recipe for corruption in a country. Fishman and Gatti (2002) argued that decentralized political institutions increases the rate of transparency and reduces corruption. In addition, they argued that democracies that practice federal system of government with a decentralized power, and a competitive government functions are more transparent and accountable. On the other hand, Acemoglu and Robinson (2013) argued that country's with extractive institutions are likely to experience corruption compared to countries with open political institutions. According to Acemoglu and Robinson, Extractive institutions developed themselves from traditional political institutions and are generally based on elite system. In this type of political societies, the elites designs the economic and political policies of the country, which are originally meant to protect their interest. Rauch and Evans (1997) also find a link with the composition of political institution and corruption. They pointed out that political institutions that offers political stability will lengthen elected officials term horizons, while bureaucracy that offers long term careers with opportunity for promotions and good wages with job security will have less incentives for corruption compared to ones without job security and low-income wages.

### **Nigeria in the face of Democracy and Corruption**

Democracy in Nigeria, like many other post-colonial countries emerged as a consequential outcome to an inherited imperial political structures and systems of governance. Thus, giving

Nigeria a free ride to earn democratic status. Although, Sartori (1962) argued that democracy can only exist only when its ideals and values are brought into being. The list of what constitute democratic ideals is often controversial especially with the upsurge of particularism or cultural democracy, however, Yagboyaju (2010) identified some of the ideals of liberal democracy to include, periodic election, rule of law, constitutionalism, transparency and accountability. In the same sense, Jibril and Kabiru (2017) argued that one of the conditions for establishing a democracy is electoral regime. This view is in line with Palmer (2008), when he conceived democracy as a system of government that periodically organizes election, where one party replaces another with a loyal opposition.

In the case of Nigeria, one can argue that, outside of the colonial imposed political status of democracy, since 1999 that the country returned to democracy, elections have become the main source of changing government, and also a sanctioning mechanism used in accessing vertical accountability. However, to what extent electoral factor has transformed democracy into good governance is a question yet to be answered. Instead, democracy in Nigeria is practiced as a mere attempt to politics, that of which has been reduced to a contest for political office and competition for its spoils. In this vein, one can note that electoral democracy in Nigeria is about competitive struggle through politics for power. Politics in this sense is an attempt to acquire political power through electoral means. But according to Dudley (1975), politics in Nigeria is not about alternative policies but about the control of men over men and resources. This view was well articulated theoretically by Joseph (1991) with his prebendalist perspective on the country's political sociology. In the same sense, Ikpe (2005) used Max Weber's explanation of patrimonialism to explain the nature of the state, and politics in Nigeria. The common identifier of this view which equates democratic politics in Nigeria to a patrimonial state is that of corruption, nepotism, political instability, lack of accountability, and administrative inefficiency. Rule of law was also identified as a pre-requisite to claim democracy. The concept of rule of law was first introduced in the political philosophy of Montesquieu, where he argued that the use of political power is subject to the formal constraints of standing rules that are codified in the positive laws of the land (Krause, 2021). In Nigeria, the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes in Section 1(1) that the "constitution is supreme and its provisions shall have binding force on all authorities and persons throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria" (Nigerian Constitution, 1999). The essence of this principle is to promote equality before the law and as well guide the conduct of government and its people. Be as it may, there are several instances both in the Nigerian constitution and the practice of democracy where the scope of application of this principle is brought to question. For instance, Section 308 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, otherwise called the Immunity Clause, confers immunity from legal proceedings on certain political office holders. The political office holders protected with the immunity clause include, a person holding office of the president, vice-president, governor, and deputy governor. The purpose of the immunity clause is to provide the incumbent of that office a free hand and mind to perform the duties and responsibilities of his/her office without distraction from criminal investigation. It is perhaps, ironical for the constitution to have stated that no one is above the law in the section 1, and also rescues some persons from the law. The consequences of protecting some political office holders from criminal investigation is a recipe for abuse of power, which amounts to corruption. Rule of law exists to enable checks and balances between the arms of government, but when one arm of government is excluded from being checked it further shows that democracy has not fully been established. This makes Nigeria democracy vulnerable to corruption.

Another instance of Nigeria democratic relapse to corruption on rule of law, is on the aspect of legislative oversight. The Nigerian constitution empowers the legislative organ to periodically monitor and review executive actions. The legislative oversight function is designed to promote checks and balances, enthrone financial discipline, accountability, good governance and transparency in the public office. However, this function has been subjected to abuse by the legislature. There are numerous corrupt cases against legislative members on demanding gratification in order to subvert the intended constitutional responsibilities. There are also other reports of budget peddling by Nigerian legislatures which often result in budget racketeering. These practices and other related issues which involve the outright abuse of the constitution and the principle of rule of law clearly shows how damaged Nigeria democracy has become to corruption.



Accountability and transparency were also charged as an integral essence of democracy. Takya (1989) offered what she thought as a general view of accountability by defining it as an official personal obligations to carry out assigned duties or activities and be responsible for outcomes (1989: 61). Similarly, Adegbite (2009) argued that accountability is the obligation to demonstrate that work has been conducted in accordance with agreed rules and standards and the officer reports fairly on performance result. Both opinions on accountability suggest due process and being held responsible to one's delegated action.

In democracy, public accountability is a veritable tool for either electoral reward or disgrace given meted on political office holders seeking reelection. In this sense, Adebayo (2002) argued that Political office holders acting on accountability are constantly mindful of public accountability while performing public duties and are therefore anxious of not acting in a manner that would expose them and the system they operated to public criticism. Similarly, Ujah (2010) noted that public officers are made to give account of their stewardship in service either directly or indirectly.

Transparency also involves acting in such a manner that is open and honest. Political office holders are elected into public office to act on the interest of the public based on trust. Therefore, it stands to good reasoning that all forms of secrecy and shady dealings detract from effective and proper practice of accountability.

In the case of democracy in Nigeria, the high number of reported cases of corruption among the government agents, suggest that most political office holders are neither transparent or feel any sense of accountability in discharging their delegated duties. While it is argued that accountability is the benchmark that motivates voters to sanction their elected representative through voting them out of office. However, there are other corrupt factors that play a role in elections and its outcome in Nigeria. These factors include, money politics, electoral violence, ethnic resentment, and politics of godfatherism.

#### Money Politics

In the contemporary Nigerian politics, money politics have continued to be a factor that undermine democratization in the country. Onuoha (2002) pointed out that the concept of money politics involves the significant role played by party funding and election financing in the realization of genuine democratic participation. Lack of clear constitutional stipulation on the benchmark of funds expected to be used by political parties and electoral contestants have continued to undermine the genuity of electoral process in Nigeria. Yagboyaju (2010) noted that the abuse of electoral process by wealthy and influential Nigerians by means of party funding and election finances constitute a great threat to the country's democratization. Political parties are at will to charge members who are seeking elective offices any amount they deem fit without any iota of regulation. For instance, the All Progressive Congress (APC) demanded presidential aspirants of their party to pay hundred million naira (N100,000,000 i.e 238.095\$) for presidential nomination form (BBC News, April 20, 2022). Whereas, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) charged forty million naira (N40,000,000 i.e 95,238\$) for presidential nomination form of their party (Premiumtimes Newspaper, April 21, 2022). Perhaps, it's obvious that politics in Nigeria is a business of highest bidder takes it all, and shares the spoils to their party men. The financial racketeering by those seeking political office and their political parties, which includes monetary inducement of voters during election, and bribing electoral officials have sown doubts about the legitimacy of the electoral process in Nigeria.

#### Electoral Violence

According to Albert (2007), electoral violence involves all forms of organized acts of threats aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder or opponent before, during and after an election with an intention to determine delay or influence a political process. In Nigeria, violence stands as the chief means of manipulating elections outcomes. Jibril and Kabiru (2010) noted that Nigerian politicians resort to violence as alternate to losing in any polling station across the country. Politicians engage the services of thugs and armed criminals to hijack electoral materials and cause violent in the election places. The use of violence during elections have become rampant among politicians who are seeking public office. Corrupt political office holders resort to electoral violence in other to win elections. From 1999 to 2019 general elections, violence poses greater threat to free and fair elections.

### **Ethnic Resentment.**

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society, with high ethnically induced sentiment. Thus democratic politics in Nigeria is dominated along with ethnic fractionalization. Politicians often use ethnic cards to induce voters during elections. Lijphart (1977) acknowledged the difficulty of democratically managing a plural society such as Nigeria. Lijphart argued that plural societies exist only when there is political division among political actors who have failed to recognize equity as an objective principle. Corrupt politicians in Nigeria, especially those from the ethnic majority regions believe that the mere fact that they are coming from a certain part of the country is enough qualification to earn them their aspired political position. They do not care about electoral reward through accountability since ethnic sentiment will be used as a tool for electoral victory.

### **Politics of Godfatherism**

The politics of godfatherism is one of the identified factors exacerbating corruption and undermines accountability in Nigeria's democracy. Ofor and Eze (2018) defined "godfatherism as men who have the power and financial capacity to decide and determine who gets nominated to contest election and who wins in the election" (2018: 79). In simple sense, godfathers are regarded as wealthy members of the society who are willing to sponsor an electoral candidate in election both financially and influentially. The godfather uses all his financial and political will to make sure his political godson wins an election or gets political appointment with the hope of getting something greater in return. Kolawale (2018) pointed out that godfatherism has been negatively affecting the political system of Nigeria since its return to democracy in the fourth republic. The concept of godfatherism in Nigerian politics can be likened to political entrepreneur or a proprietorship. Their sole business is to invest in a willing godson who would only serve to represent their interest but in terms of executing government business and political appointments. Most political godsons are often corrupt public officials because they serve the interest of their political merchants as against public interest.

No doubt Nigerian democracy has continued to struggle with the bottleneck of corruption to deliver on good governance.

### ***Old Game, New Gambit***

#### **Political Culture and the basis of Corruption in Nigeria's Democracy**

Political culture is a tool employed when there is a contradiction in explaining political phenomena. In the same view, Johnston (1983) pointed out that political culture helps in defining the boundaries of permissible political action. Almond (1963) also conceived political culture as the distribution of patterns of orientation. Pattern of orientation in this instance, deals with two factors; aggregate distribution of individual characteristics, and a system of political symbols. Both approaches explain relationships in people's behavioral patterns or some sort of world view. In a simple opinion, political culture seeks to explain people's pattern of behavior through an informed identity. Therefore, political culture should affect the amount of corruption occurring in a political system, and well respond to incidence of corruption when detected.

In the case of Nigeria, Nigeria is a multi-cultural state with heterogeneous identities. In fact, one of the persistent challenges of the contemporary Nigerian state is how to build a common homogeneous national identity. This effort was entrusted deeply on democracy, with the hope of building political bridges through good governance, and as well enthroning a single national political identity. Be as it may, such efforts have not been achieved and there seems to be no hope in sight.

The link between political culture and corruption in Nigeria's democracy has been largely ignored by both academic and formal discussions. Yet, political culture presents itself as a veritable tool in explaining the deepening upsurge of corruption in Nigeria's democracy. A critical look into the dynamics of what has become corruption in the contemporary Nigerian democracy reveals a historical root to culture. Chinweuba (2018) revealed that the customary exchange of gifts which are prevalent across Nigerian cultures degenerated into bribery and favoritism. Perhaps, it is noteworthy to argue that the traditional exchange of gifts and recognition of good deeds which are prevalent in most Nigerian cultures, exposes the sharp link between appreciation and anticipation and conveys an undue advantage to the giver whereby leads to corruption. Outside of bribery as the dominant form of corruption in Nigerian democracy, there are other forms of corruptions which are largely influenced through cultural sentiment. For instance, a public office

holder who is either elected or appointed to represent public interest and act in such a capacity that shows transparent and rule of law in his/her exercise of duties and responsibilities, are sometimes put under pressure from family or community. In a bid to satisfy the interest of his family or cultural groups leads to either nepotism, tribalism and cronyism.

In view of the multi-cultural structure of the Nigerian state. There's a salient cultural and ethnic competition among various groups. Hence, public officers acting in public interest are often accused of showing more loyalty to their ethnic background other than state interest. It is common within the public sector that public officers offers favoritism to people of their common cultural identity rather than being transparent in their duties. Thus, within the traditions of these cultures are political elements that foster the development and spread of corruption in the country. the culprits of corrupt practices are also influenced by other cultural orientation. The cultural implication of corruption in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. Culture acts like a cloud that inhibits corruption in Nigerian democracy.

### **Political Institution and the basis of corruption in Nigeria's Democracy**

Political institution has remained an inseparable aspect of democracy. Thus, some scholars of modern democracy like (Beetham 1999, Brick 2002, Grugel 2002, Kekic 2007) as was explained in the previous sections have all included the existence of political institution as a requisite for defining democracy. According to Levi (1988) political institution may mean the "formal political arrangements aggregating individuals and regulating their behaviors through the use of explicit rules and decision-making process maintained by an individual or a group of individuals who formally have been authorized to hold such power" (1988: 160). This definition indicated that political institution exist as a pointer to political actions including exerting rules on the relationship between inter-personal and societal behaviors. Similarly, Bell (2002), and Lane (2008), identified political institution to imply rules, compliance procedures and standard operating practices that structures the relationship between individuals. Therefore, if political institution exists to dictate rules that guide the conduct of human behavior and how it relates with others, then it implies that corruption happens when these rules are negated.

In this passage, I will examine political institution in line with (Moe 2005) rational choice theory on political institution, where political institution was treated as both structure for power and structure for cooperation. Power and cooperation are two important factors in political institution. Therefore, conversation about the operation of political institution centers either on cooperation for power or cooperation through power. Powers in political institution are exacted through principles and procedures guiding the conduct of governance. These include rule of law, constitution, and political legitimacy, or a collaboration of all.

In Nigeria, the political institution exists as the determining principles in the practice of democracy. However weak implementation of the fundamental principles of democracy such as rule of law through the means of political institution in Nigeria creates incentives for corruption. Political institution in Nigeria is weak and cannot sustain policies that inhibit corruption.

There are four reasons why political institution in Nigeria is susceptible to corruption.

First, the democratization pattern in Nigeria through which effective political institution can be established is faulty. Democracy is both a process and procedure and not a product. Western democracies developed overtime through series of transformation and modernization of traditional institution into a new pattern of institutions which are cultural related. Whereas, Nigerian democracy is more or less an imported product which has no traditional or internal mechanism to develop from, rather a learned culture that struggles to abrogate the existing cultural institutions.

Second, the main instrument that stabilizes political institution in democracy which is the rule of law, is in direct conflict with the Nigerian constitution. Rule of law as explained in the previous passage, is the organic principle of democracy and the chief cornerstone of every constitution. However, the Nigerian constitution through its 'immunity clause' excludes the political office holders who are the main subject of this principle from being under the law.

Third, There is also the conflict of interest in the constitutional administration of Nigerian democracy. For instance, The Nigerian arms of government, the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary are all in the shadow of each. There is lack of absolute independent among this three arms of government which results to lack of checks and balance. Both the executive and judiciary in Nigeria collude. Hence, it is difficult to hold the executive responsible for any actions that are in contrary to the constitution, since the judiciary arm is under the influence of the

executives. For example, the minister of justice who is appointed by the president also serves as the Attorney General of the Federation. Also, the Chief Judge of the Supreme Court, which is the highest court in Nigeria is also been appointed by the president. Therefore, cannot issue judgement against his benefactor.

Fourth, according to Moe (2005) political institution is also the structure of cooperation and power. The devolution of cooperation through power in Nigeria is within the three branches of government, the federal, state, and local government. Thus, making Nigeria a federal state. but lack of true federalism hampers the effectiveness of political institution in Nigeria. Each branch of government is by law expected to act in an independent capacity, but in close coordination with others. However, Nigerian federalism lack this merit. Power is centered within the federal institutions, other unit branches of government exists as a mere administrative appendage.

According to Onodugo (2016) he argued that corruption has a high propensity to thrive in a political environment where legal and political institutions are weak and government policies generate economic rents. Democracy in Nigeria was not developed through a strong institutions and cannot effective institution. Therefore, it is obvious that Nigeria democracy is vulnerable to corruption.

### Conclusion

The thematic content of this article is centered on the deliberating effect of corruption on democracy in Nigeria. Instead of Nigeria's democracy to mature into advanced democracy that guarantees strong political institution and political culture, civil liberty, good governance, stable economy, development, and consolidation of hope of ordinary citizens, the process have faltered into a mockery or to what some scholars now describe as "nascent democracy" "transitional democracy", or "fledgling democracy".

This article has traced the genesis of most of the daunting challenges facing democratization in the developing countries, especially in Nigeria, to the origins of democracy in the countries. Countries with colonial democracy did not witness a rapid democratic transition of their political culture and institutions, instead democracy was imposed to them unaware of it can be sustained. Democracy in Nigeria, could not advance itself into building strong political pattern because it lacked historical transition of cultural institutions. Thus, the new developed political institution in Nigeria only exacerbated the cultural patterns into culture of corruption.

From the above, it has been established that Nigerian democracy cannot survive the daunting challenges of corruption or neither can it reform itself under the present political pattern into a transparent and accountable political system. However, this article is of the opinion that an overhaul of the entire political process in Nigeria, will only lead an accountable and effective democracy.

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