Impact of Democratization on Corruption in Nigeria

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is intended to explore the impact of democratization on corruption in Nigeria. The reintroduction of democracy in Nigeria in 1999 has not been met with the reduction of corruption. Despite the historical tendency that the prevalence of corruption has provided a pretext for the termination of democracy, Nigeria has maintained democracy for an unprecedented time-scale. It is attempted to probe this puzzle by analyzing 1) how the political leaders have approached the issue of corruption and 2) how the activities of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Nigeria’s anti-corruption agency, are relevant to the continuation of democracy. The findings of these analyses identify the critical basis on which corruption has persisted. The politics of Nigeria is factionalized and easily collapses into a violent conflict, and patronage plays a critical role in avoiding conflict. Therefore, the leaders’ endeavor to maintain political stability has undermined the campaign to combat corruption.
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There are compelling reasons to hypothesize that democratic states will be less corrupt. Authors such as Treisman (2000), Brunetti and Wedar (2003) and Kotera, Okada and Samreth (2012) argue that the media scrutiny and popular elections, which are the fundamental components of democratic governance, facilitate the establishment of an elite-challenging structure whereby empowered citizens disqualify and remove corrupt politicians and public servants from their offices. However, this argument is challenged by the realities of various countries in Africa, where corruption has persisted in spite of democratization. Nigeria provides the most significant case that exemplifies this paradox. In 1999, military rule in this country was terminated with the reintroduction of popular elections and free press. Shortly after the reestablishment of democracy, Olusegun Obasanjo, who was inaugurated into the presidency, established the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) to investigate and prosecute the individuals involved in corrupt activities (Adebanwi, 2013, p. 4). However, democratization and creation of the anti-corruption institution have not been met with a reduction of corruption. Instead, Nigeria today continues to face extensive levels of corruption. According to 2014 report by the Transparency International, Nigeria is ranked in 136th among 175 countries in terms of the performance of containing corruption, rendering it “highly corrupt”\(^1\).

An argument has been made that the risks and volatilities in politics, stemming from the multitude of ethnic, communal and traditional identities in many countries in Africa are the fundamental factors for the persistence of corruption (De Waal, 2009).

\(^1\) For more information see [http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results](http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results).
These factors have rendered the state system weak and insecure, perpetuating the leaders’ reliance on informal and patrimonial network as a tool to acquire and maintain its legitimacy\(^2\). The case of Nigeria seems to fit this description. In this country, ethnic diversity has constantly been the basis of civic disorder. There have been various clandestine groups and ethnic militias formed across the federation. These groups have become potential factors to challenge the political leadership\(^3\). Despite these debilitating factors that appear to be perpetuating the weakness of the state systems, Nigeria has maintained its democratic governance for more than fifteen years. This relative stability of the politics appears to be causing an institutionalization of political transactions in this country. In April 2015, Nigeria’s fifth presidential election was held. In this election, the incumbent president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan was defeated by the opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari (Finnan, 2015). This shift in leadership was followed by no major disruption to the social order, although there are reports of intimidation of voters by the militias sponsored by regional politicians (Finnan, 2015). Adam Nossiter views this relatively peaceful shift in leadership as a remarkable event that signifies the maturation of democracy in Nigeria. He also states that this case raises a hope for the consolidation of democracy in other countries in Africa (Nossiter, 2015). The reality of Nigeria where there is a symbiosis of a continuation of democrat ic rule and the persistence of extensive corruption implies that these two factors are not mutually exclusive. Application of de

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\(^2\) Alex de Waal provides a detailed description of how social and political volatilities necessarily causes corruption, and how such a phenomenon become an inevitable outcome of the peace-building process in a conflict ridden circumstances (De Waal, 2009). Further details of this description will be provided in the following part of this paper.

\(^3\) Moses Metumara Druji describes how the sizable proportion of the Yoruba people in the south-west and the Igbo in the south-east of Nigeria have formed the insurgent groups (Oodua People’s Congress and Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra respectively), and widely utilize the rhetoric of ethnic nationalism to mobilize the local support in their attempts to agitate the security of these regions (Druji, 2012).
Waal’s argument to the case of Nigeria leads to the following hypothesis: corruption and democracy must coexist to sustain a stable democratic rule in a volatile political environment of Nigeria.

My research on the case of Nigeria aims to explore this hypothesis by analyzing the impact of democratic rule on the elites’ approaches to the issue of corruption. This inquiry is situated in the following puzzle. Contemporary politics of Nigeria is characterized by the proliferation of militias or clandestine organizations that take up arms and threaten social stability. This shows that the political leaders of Nigeria continue to face substantial risks in maintaining their positions. The transactions that distribute material benefits and accommodate the interests of these groups are key to reduce such risks. Such transactions necessarily involve illicit transfer of public resources, which is considered as corruption. However, it is also shown that the EFCC has been established as a watchdog institution to combat corruption. Such an attempt may challenge the very basis of the transactions on which the elites rely to maintain security and social order. Contemporary politics of Nigeria presents a coexistence of an environment that necessitates the leaders’ reliance on patrimonial networks and the attempts to combat corruption. Therefore, it is essential to identify the significance of the interactions between these seemingly contradicting factors and their relevance to the persistence of a democratic rule. Fundamental questions to consider in this paper are: 1) How has the elite’s contest for power within the framework of democracy affected the activities of the EFCC? 2) Has the EFCC functioned in such a manner that promotes the establishment of the rule of law? What kind of conduct has been sanctioned and what kind of activities have been condoned by this agency? 3) How has the EFCC affected the
behaviour of the elites? Is there an emergence of particular patterns of the leaders’
behaviour in their attempts in balancing two important and competing demands; their
political survival and an outward appearance of combatting corruption? Exploration of
these questions is important in understanding the most crucial factor in maintaining
democracy amid the volatile political landscape. Identification of this factor will enable
one to assess the prospects for the future development of democratic governance in
Nigeria and the effect of corruption in such a process.

In this paper, the answers to these questions will be provided in the following order.
The beginning of this paper will define and identify common features of corruption. This
will be achieved through a thorough and critical analysis of theoretical approaches of the
scholars who situate corruption in specific social settings. It is also aimed at exploring the
debate on the economic impacts of corruption and the impact of democracy on the extent
of corruption. Secondly, the theoretical analysis will be followed by the case study of
Nigeria. Detailed analysis of the case will be the basis of the construction of the
conceptual frameworks that particularly applies to the case of Nigeria. It will also lead to
the development of the theory of corruption and its relevance to democracy over the
volatile and risky political environment. Such a theory may facilitate the assessment of
the prospects for the future development of political landscapes of Nigeria.

**Trends and Extent of Corruption:**

Corruption is a universal issue that exists in every country. However, the extent of
this issue varies greatly from one country to another. Transparency International (TI), a
non-governmental organization based in Berlin, provides the Corruption Perception Index
(CPI), which is widely used as a benchmark to assess the extent and prevalence of corruption in each country. Based on the CPI scores, the TI presents a list of countries from the countries that are “least corrupt” with highest CPI to the “most corrupt” countries with lowest CPI. This ranking shows divergences in the magnitude of corruption across countries and the prevalence of this issue in a majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Divergence in severity of corruption among countries necessitates the identification and analysis of the factors that accelerate corruption in specific settings. In order to illuminate such factors, it is important first to explore a following question: are there critical social, economic or political factors that are particular to the societies in Africa that contributed to the severity of corruption in these societies?

**Definition of Corruption:**

Literature on corruption includes many different perspectives and provides a diversity of conceptual frameworks. In order to explore a question presented above, it is necessary to draw a clear definition of corruption by analyzing the theoretical approaches of various scholars and identify the characteristics of corruption. Samuel Huntington conceptualizes corruption from a sociological perspective and defines it as a deviation of public officials from the widely accepted bureaucratic norms, values and ethics. He argues that it typically involves “an exchange of political action for economic wealth” (Huntington, 1968, p. 66). John T. Quah, Cooper A. Drury, Jonathan Kriekhaus and Michael Lusztig draw a similar definition of corruption and define a scope of conduct that is universally conceived as corrupt practices. Quah adopts William A. Clark's

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4 For more detailed information, see 2014 Results, Tables and Rankings at Transparency International website: [http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results](http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results)
concept of corruption as the conduct of public officials aimed at acquiring “forbidden or circumscribed benefits” (Quah, 1994, p. 392). Drury, Krieckhaus and Lusztig elaborate this definition by providing a specific set of behaviours that are perceived as corrupt. They define corruption as any form of “abuse of public office for private gain”, which includes bribery, nepotism, theft, and many other forms of misappropriation of public resources (Drury et al., 2006, p. 122). From these points, the conduct that is conceived as corrupt involves embezzlement or irregular forms of extraction of public resources, and it is typically considered unethical and driven by the private interests of the public officials. However, Mustaq Hussain Khan argues that such a definition exclusively focuses on the behaviours of political elites and public officials and does not precisely reflect the everyday conceptions of corruption. He defines corruption as any illicit act in which the state and public servants are either directly or indirectly involved (Khan, 2006, p. 202). He argues that unethical acts of private entities or individuals with no direct involvement of public officials are considered as “theft” not as corruption; but even in such cases there is an implication of corruption because they may occur with “connivance” of the public officials (Khan, 2006, p. 202). In fact, corruption is not particular to the public sphere but it also takes place in interactions between private actors. J. P. Olivier de Sardan introduces the concept of a “corruption complex”, which also includes illicit conduct that is not categorized as corruption in legal terms but have the common features as corruption: these are associated with the public and bureaucratic functions and deviate from the ethics of “public property” or “public services” (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, pp.

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5 Khan in his writing attempts to assess the state's role in economic transactions by exploring the impact of corruption. Due to the purpose of his study, Khan does not adopt this definition: instead, he adopts narrower definition of corruption, which puts the activities of the political leaders at the centre of analysis (Khan, 2006, p. 202).
From the points made by the scholars presented above, the definition of corruption is drawn as follows. First, it is noted that the notion of legality is a fundamental criterion for corruption, since it sets the standard which distinguishes acceptable behaviours from corrupt practices. In other words, there is no recognition of corruption without the presence of the rules that proscribe such acts. Secondly, corruption is a conduct not exclusive to the state and elites; it occurs both in private and public realms of a society. In this paper, therefore, the term corruption refers to the illicit conduct that involves an exchange of public resources with direct or indirect involvement of politicians or public servants who manipulate their positions and circumvent the legal frameworks.

Corruption involves transactions between individuals and induces a cascade of consequences to a society. Olivier de Sardan groups corruption into two major categories, which are different in scales and frequencies and involve different actors. First, “big time” corruption refers to illicit conduct of political leaders such as politicians, high civil servants and bureaucrats, aimed at increasing their wealth for their material advancement (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, p. 28). This type of corruption involves a transfer of a greater amount of public resources and its impact on a society is prominent, since it diverts public resources to non-productive purposes. Secondly, petty corruption is defined as the conduct in which individuals in various occupations such as police, clerks, nurses or custom officers receive bribes from ordinary citizens in return for services (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, p. 28). Although this type of corruption typically involves a transaction of significantly smaller amount of resources in comparison to the big-time corruption, it occurs in a much greater frequency. Petty corruption is “extremely familiar” to the lives
of ordinary citizens and it is the most widespread form of corruption in Africa (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, p. 28). Another outstanding characteristic of petty corruption is that ordinary citizens can be either perpetrators or victims of such conduct; they can either be extorted to or willingly offer the bribe in return for the services or favours from the officers (Olivier de Sardan, 1999). The distinction between the corruption at the top and the petty corruption must be highlighted in this research in order to accurately assess their characteristics and particular impacts on a society. However, it should also be noted that despite their distinct characteristics, there are commonalities between these types of corruption. Olivier de Sardan explains that these two types of corruption are the “two poles of a continuum” that are grounded on and driven by common social and economic factors that “favour or legitimate” such activities (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, pp. 28-29). This inseparability of the two types of corruption necessitates viewing this issue in its entirety. Therefore, it is essential to identify the factors that constitute a ground on which both big time and petty corruptions thrive and how these corruptions are interrelated.

Part 2: Literature Review

Why Does Corruption Occur?

Corruption is perceived as a phenomenon deeply embedded in social interactions between individuals in a society. Huntington argues that the presence of and the individuals’ conformity to the norms and the code of ethics that sanction corruption are the factors that determine the prevalence of corruption in a society (Huntington, 1968, p. 58). He substantiates this point by providing a historical case that shows how corruption became widespread in the West during the Industrial Revolution. Industrialization caused a rapid socio-economic transformation by expanding the availability of wealth and
facilitating the rise of a new merchant class who represented particular economic interests
and political demands. The political structures in the West were too small and weak to
correspond to such rapid changes (Huntington, 1968, p. 61). The state’s inability to
“adapt sufficiently fast to provide legitimate and acceptable means” to accommodate
these new groups increased the prevalence of corruption (Huntington, 1968, p. 61). The
combination of economic expansion, the rise of a new class with particular political
interests and the underdevelopment of state systems boosted the incidence of illicit
exchanges of public resources. Such transactions were the methods for the public
officials to seize private gains; while for the emerging class these acts were the means to
“make themselves effective within the political sphere” and promote their economic
activities (Huntington, 1968, p. 61). The lack of solidity of the ethics of the public
administration caused the lack of sanction to corruption and accelerated such activities.
On the other hand, industrialization has also given rise to the new values to be upheld by
the citizens. With the development of economy, people started to demand rigid and
predictable legal systems more conducive to their economic activities and require
politicians and civil servants to conform to “universalistic and achievement-based norms”
(Huntington, 1968, p. 60). This resulted in the increased distinction between the public
and the private spheres. Industrialization was followed by a widespread acceptance and
socialization of these values creating the normative basis for determining the corrupt
behavior. The politicians and civil servants who failed to conform to these norms became
perceived as corrupt (Huntington 1968, p. 59). According to Huntington, prevalence of
corruption is a product of social and economic transformations and the state’s
incapability to adapt to such changes through legitimate means; the prevalence of
corruption is determined by the gap between the state’s incapability and the salience of the pressures emanated from socio-economic circumstances.

It is necessary to assess if the same theory can be applied to explain the case of Africa. Alex de Waal adopts the rational choice theory and illuminates an aspect of corruption as an outcome of a rational response of the leaders and prominent groups to the institutional weakness of the states in Africa (De Waal, 2009). He illustrates the particular environment that facilitates corruption in Africa. Like Huntington, de Waal identifies corruption as a consequence of the state’s incapability to adapt to, or administer the socio-economic circumstances through regular political transactions. While Huntington views modernization as a catalyst for corruption, de Waal situates corruption in the context of conflict resolution processes. He argues that with a weakly institutionalized state system, which is a common characteristic of many countries in Africa, there is a constant and substantial risk of violent conflicts and corruption is an outcome of the political elites’ attempts to pacify the groups that are capable of disrupting the social stability (De Waal, 2009, p. 112). He argues that a weak state system lacks capabilities to maintain security and social stabilities through legal means. The impact of this limitation is accentuated by the multitude of ethnic, religious and communal identities in many countries in Africa, leading to the creation of a highly volatile political market that may easily collapse into a violent conflict (De Waal, 2009, pp. 101-102). Amidst such circumstances, the ruler and the elites rely on the illicit and unconventional transfer of wealth to buy loyalty from prominent social groups capable of challenging the state structures through violence (De Waal, 2009, p. 104-106). The outcome of such
transactions is the prevalence of corruption. Therefore, for de Waal, corruption in Africa is largely an outcome of the actions taken by the political leaders in response to the volatile and unstable socio-economic circumstances. De Waal’s argument informs that the gap between a weak state and salience of pressure from its social surroundings induces high prevalence of corruption as the leaders seek to minimize the risks induced by such a pressure.

As shown above, Huntington and de Waal conceptualize the process in which corruption becomes prevalent from different perspectives. Despite divergence in perspectives, both analyses provide detailed accounts of how a combination of a weak state and the pressures from its socio-economic and political surroundings induces widespread utilizations of illicit means of mobilizing public resources to maintain social integrity. Their arguments elucidate that corruption is a systemic issue profoundly affected by the state and the structural features of a society. A possible drawback of their analyses is their exclusive focus on the type of corruption that involves political leaders and elites. As Olivier de Sardan points out, there are two types of corruption; big-time corruption perpetrated by the political leaders and petty corruption, which pervades the ordinary lives of individuals. Although both Huntington’s and de Waal’s arguments provide detailed accounts of how the former becomes prevalent, they do not provide an adequate explanation of how petty corruption becomes widespread and how it is associated with big-time corruption. Olivier de Sardan argues that these forms of corruption affect a society differently. While the scope of big time corruption is narrower.

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6 De Waal calls this process as “patrimonial buy-in”, which needs to be “inclusive and robust” to maintain stability of the political circumstances in conflict-ridden or weakly institutionalized states (De Waal, 2009, p. 112).
(it involves the political leaders and the elites), its impact on a society is greater as it withdraws greater amount of public resources (Olivier de Sardan, 2009, p. 28). While the amount of resources exchanged in petty corruption is generally smaller, it affects a broader segment of a society as it occurs in a greater frequency and shapes the transactions in the civic lives (Olivier de Sardan, 2009, p. 28). Since these two types of corruption are interrelated, focusing on the big-time corruption leaves the significance of petty corruption and its association with big-time corruption unexplained. Lack of explanation on how big-time and petty corruptions are associated may lead to an insufficient explanation of the nature of corruption. Although Olivier de Sardan’s analysis clarifies the distinction between big-time and petty corruption and acknowledges the interrelations between them, it does not argue how these types of corruption are interrelated. Therefore, a question remains as to how corruption at the top pervades into a lower segment of a society, giving rise to petty corruption.

**Petty Corruption as a Continuum of Big-time Corruption and Contextualized Nature of Corruption:**

Explanations have been made on how corruption becomes widespread and how corruption at the top pervades into the lower segment of a society in Africa. They commonly point to the “crisis of the African state” as the fundamental factor for the corruption in Africa. Bratton and van de Walle attribute corruption to the peculiarity of the state formation and socio-political arrangements in Africa. They argue that the Weberian explanation of social evolution does not apply to the case of Africa. The Weberian approach draws a trajectory of the transformation of socio-political system from the one based on traditions, where political authorities of the elites are personalized
and legitimated by the patrimonial logics, to a modern state, where rational-legal institutions define and limit the authority of political leaders (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997, p. 61). Contrary to such an explanation, the states in Africa have been transformed into a “neo-patrimonial” system, where there are governing structures that resemble to those of a modern society, yet the elites’ authorities continue to be legitimated by the patrimonial logics centred on their capabilities to distribute resources to their followers (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997, p. 62). Under such systems, major concerns for the elites are to maintain the legitimacy of their positions and stabilize a society by providing benefits and favours to their followers (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997, p. 61).

Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg (1984) argue that in patrimonial societies, the positions and authorities of the elites are personalized, due to the underdevelopment of legal-rational institutions, which would constrain the elites’ authorities over the use of public resources. The implication of the predominance of patrimonial logic of authority is two-fold. First, there are vertical distributions of wealth from the elites to their supporters, which involve the embezzlement of public resources. These are aimed at maintenance of the legitimacy of the elites (Jackson & Rosberg, 1984, p. 434). Secondly, personalization of authority also facilitates the public servants’ predatory extraction of resources including bribery. Jackson and Rosberg explain that the prevalence of public officers’ seeking and receiving of bribes is the common feature of personalization of authority, and it is the “evidence of the weakness of public institutions and the strength of private appetites and desires” (Jackson & Rosberg, 1984, p. 434). In Africa, corruption has spread from the top to the lower and wider segments of a society through its reproductions by the non-elites. Daniel E. Agbiboa explains that ordinary citizens in
Africa have learned the “lesson from the top”, as they “replicate their leaders’ corrupt practices at their own lowly lives in the form of petty acts of bribery, speculation, and embezzlement” (Agbiboa, 2012, p. 119).

Petty corruption is also accelerated by particular social arrangements that developed under the neo-patrimonial system. Unlike a modern political system where political and public interactions are regulated by formal and civic norms, a neo-patrimonial system is sustained by the network of informal relations between and among the rulers, the ruled, elites and non-elites. The prevalence of informal networks has shaped the nature of mobilization and distribution of wealth in Africa. Goran Hyden draws a concept of “economy of affection” to describe the particularity of societies in Africa. He explains that the civic rules and values have less impact on the social and political realities in Africa than the informal and affective ties between individuals (Hyden, 2013). In such a system, ordinary citizens are motivated to establish personal ties to those who hold important positions in the public, and exploit these networks as a means of gaining support (Hyden, 2013, p. 55). The permeation of informal networks has prevented the development of rigid rules of conduct. Instead, it institutionalized the circumvention of rules through the use of affective ties. Due to the lack of solidity in rules and institutions, social and economic circumstances of each individual have remained precarious, and the exploitation of the informal ties are perceived as “a practical and rational way of dealing with choice in contexts of uncertainty” (Hyden, 2013, p. 76). Spread of informal ties from the top to the lower segments of societies in Africa has resulted in a greater propensity for individuals to engage in illicit activities that are weakly sanctioned or regulated by the rules. This has created a profound circumstance for
the prevalence of petty corruption. Corruption is a cumulative and expansive phenomenon that can be socialized and become systemic issue to a society. As Olivier de Sardan explains; “the more corruption develops, the more it becomes engrained in social habits (the more deeply it becomes inscribed in the ‘moral economy’) and the less possible it becomes to retreat” (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, p. 32). Routinization of corruption has a socializing effect thereby expanding the scale and frequencies of corruption.

**Norms and Values and Corruption in Africa:**

Corruption in Africa is a contextualized phenomenon that is closely associated with the notion of morality and often justified by the cultural factors. Peter Ekeh (1975) associates corruption in Africa with the strength of primordial loyalties of individuals who engage in such a conduct. He identifies the colonial roots of corruption in Africa. Colonialism functioned on the basis of the imposition of colonial ideology of the cultural and moral superiority of the western institutions. This crystallized the separation of the Africans from the Western institutions and the Africans became defined “in terms of what is low” (Ekeh, 1975, p. 100). Simultaneously, colonialism has also produced a new class of African civil servants who received western education and assisted its administration. The combination of colonial separation and the emergence of indigenous civil servants made the social standings of this new group of Africans ambiguous: they could not be completely native, but they were still set apart from the Western institutions (Ekeh, 1975, pp. 99-100). This new class of indigenous elites bridged this gap by consolidating their identities to the two public realms; one consisting of modern civic life
and the other predominated by their traditional and primordial values (Ekeh, 1975). Although the elites belonged to both spheres, the two publics were distinguished from one another on the basis of morality. The relative strength of their affiliations to their communities and the traditional obligations has led to the superiority of the “primordial public” (Ekeh, 1975, p. 100). It became the sphere of moral obligations that individuals would strive to preserve and became contrasted to “an amoral civic public”, which became exploited as the source of personal gain and the resources to be used “to benefit the moral primordial public” (Ekeh, 1975, p. 100). The “moral” primordial public has set the values which imposed the obligation on the public servants to divert the gains extracted from the “amoral” civic public to serve the interest of the communal, ethnic or geographic entities to which they belong (Ekeh, 1975). This “dialectics of the two publics” has socialized the normative values that are particular to the societies in Africa. Ekeh explains that “a good citizen of the primordial public gives out and asks for nothing in return” and that the norms produced by the dialectics has created the “unwritten law” that “it is legitimate to rob the civic public in order to strengthen the primordial public” (Ekeh, 1975, p. 108). Based on this analysis, Ekeh argues that the dialectics between the civic and primordial publics, which facilitated the “legitimization of the need to seize largesse from the civic public in order to benefit the primordial public” (Ekeh, 1975, p. 110). Therefore, intricate interactions between the primordial and civic realms of the society and the values and expectations pertaining to these spheres accelerated corruption in Africa.

The concept of morality is closely associated with corruption in Africa. Olivier de Sardan identifies interactions of social and cultural factors that perpetuated corruption in
Africa. While Ekeh approaches corruption by analyzing the historical factors that have driven the behavior of the elites, Olivier de Sarden widens the scope of analysis by illustrating how the logic of morality is upheld in wider segments of a society and how such a logic is associated with the issue of corruption. Although Olivier de Sarden attempts to avoid “culturalist” or overly deterministic explanation, he argues that a critical analysis of culture and its impact on the behaviour of individuals is essential in assessing the fundamental characteristic of corruption in Africa (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, p. 26). According to Olivier de Sardan, corruption is often justified by the principle of “moral economy”. He draws this concept from James C. Scott’s notion of “subsistence ethic”, which prevails in a society where resources are scarce, economic conditions of the individuals are precarious and their subsistence is at stake. Scott’s argument is grounded on his analysis of the political behaviour of the peasants in Southeast Asia and their relations with the elites. He argues that the elites’ capabilities to assure the peasants of their subsistence through the provision of resources in return for collecting tributes constitute the basis of their legitimacy (Scott, 1976, p. 42). The failure to fulfill this task is typically viewed as a violation of the ethic, and the relations between the elites and the peasants become perceived as “exploitative” (Scott, 1976, p. 170). According to Scott, societies that are frequently exposed to crop failure are prone to face this social disequilibrium. Under such circumstances, corruption and circumvention of rules become justified as a viable alternative to violent confrontations with the elites, and as a valid conduct aimed at acquisition of subsistence through an overt defiance of “unjust” systems (Scott, 1976, p. 231).
Olivier de Sardan applies this concept to the case of Africa. He argues that the individuals who participate in corruption often find the grounds of justification of their engagement in such practices in the traditional norms and value systems. He conceives the principle of moral economy in Africa as a logic of gift-giving and mutual support, which affirms the “moral duties” of: 1) the individuals with greater access to wealth to grant a share of their benefits to their families and communities and 2) the recipients of particular support to provide gratuity to their benefactors (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, p. 38). The strength and the breadth of social ties and networks have strengthened the expectations for the individuals to fulfill such obligations, and the act of refraining from doing so is considered as deviance, which is met by sanctions and reproach (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, pp. 39-41). When these socio-cultural factors are convoluted by the authoritarian regime, predatory behaviour of political elites and public servants such as embezzlement and extortions became routinized. This has caused the widespread perception of the citizens of engaging in such acts “as a rightful aspect of their office” (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, pp. 41-42). The socialization and reproduction of corrupt practices have made combating corruption difficult.

Olivier de Sardan acknowledges that corruption is often referred in derogatory terms and such conduct is widely denounced in societies in Africa. However, this widespread stigmatization of corruption is contrasted to “overwhelming impunity” and lack of sanction to those who engage in such conduct (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, p. 30). This paradoxical image of coexistence of moral condemnations and the ubiquity of corruption is due to the strength of familial and communal ties in societies in Africa,
which makes attempts to sanction corruption both costly and risky\(^7\) (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, p. 30). Olivier de Sardan explains that corruption and the related behaviours are “considered by their perpetrators as being legitimate, and often as not being corruption at all”, and “only the practices to which one falls victim or from which one is excluded are denounced as being corrupt” (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, p. 34). Although corruption is met by a robust critique in Africa, such critique comes from those who are neither beneficiaries nor benefactors of such a practice. In other words, corruption is condemned only by those who are disaffected by it or alienated from its benefit. Olivier de Sardan argues that “everyone is sincerely in favour of respecting the public domain, and wants the bureaucracy to be at the service of the citizens, but everyone participates by means of everyday actions in the reproduction of the system he denounces” (Olivier de Sardan, 1999, p. 48). Although people would prefer the reduction of corruption, it is difficult to live without it. This gap between people’s ideals and the reality has perpetuated a self-propelling cycle that has routinized, socialized and magnified the scale of corruption to the extent that it has become a systemic issue that is profoundly engrained in both civic and private spheres of a society.

Corruption is a political issue as well as it is conditioned by culture and socio-economic arrangements of a society. It is an outcome of the state’s inability to adapt to socio-economic dynamics. The enormity of this gap in Africa is the major cause of the prevalence of corruption in this region. Weak state structures in this region have led to the prevalence of informal institutions, which has encouraged citizens and elites to

\(^7\) Olivier de Sardan explains that the corrupt practices are often identified by the relatives or friends of the perpetrators. However, they are discouraged from reporting such practices to the police, since it is typically met with social sanctions from those who benefit from such practices (Olivier de Sardan, 2009, p. 30). An attempt to challenge corrupt practices carries with it the risk of jeopardizing their social standings.
engage in political and economic transactions without constraints from rigid and formal rules. This resulted in the widespread corruption and the lack of sanction to such conduct in Africa. According to Huntington, a set of normative values that denounce corruption constitute a crucial factor for the perception of corruption. Olivier de Sardan’s argument is that the mere existence of culture of denouncing corruption does not necessarily lead to the reduction of corruption. He explains that traditional norms, which validate the culture of gift giving as the righteous aspect of both civic and political lives, became convoluted into the functions of personalized public offices. This created a paradoxical reality where widespread criticism and agony of the adverse consequences of corruption have not been translated into sincere and effective attempts to combat corruption.

**Theory One - “Democracy-Reduces-Corruption”:**

Many countries in Africa have attempted to reduce corruption through consolidation of democracy. Adebanwi notes that there has been a “growing awareness of the danger” of corruption in an increasing number of countries in Africa and he describes this trend as the “anti-corruption moment in their democratic history” (Adebanwi, 2013, p. 3). This trend is presumably based on a theoretical approach which views corruption as an outcome of a lack of effective constraints on the authority of the political elites. The scholars representing this theory argue that the consolidation of the democratic structure, which consists of competitive elections and free media, leads to a greater openness and transparency of the political processes and promotes a reduction of corruption. Treisman conceptualizes corruption as an outcome of a rational choice by

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8 He mentions the cases of Nigeria, Liberia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and South Sudan as examples (Adebanwi, 2013, p. 3).
politicians and public servants in the circumstances where the perceived benefit of engaging in corrupt activities exceeds the costs or risk of being caught and punished for engaging in such activities (Treisman, 2000, p. 402). Similarly, Brunetti & Weder (2003) theorize that corruption becomes prevalent when the power of the elites is unconstrained and when it is costly for the citizens to attempt to remove corrupt leaders from their offices.

The scholars who represent this perspective argue that corruption is reduced by the entrenchment of democracy, through the attainment of free and fair elections and increased media exposures of the cases of corruption. Kotera, Okada and Samreth argue that democratic election and media scrutiny promote the establishment of “monitoring mechanism”, which creates “checks and balances” on the power of politicians, thereby enhancing the government’s performance in reducing corruption (Kotera et al., 2012, p. 2346). Treisman elaborates this argument by explaining that the presence of competitive elections and free media raises the costs of corrupt activities, since active exposures and scrutiny of corruption creates an environment where corrupt politicians face the risk of loss of jobs and privileges and receiving punishment and social stigma (Treisman, 2000, p. 404). Brunetti and Weder argue that the media function as an “additional channel” that people utilize to challenge corrupt leaders, thus controlling corruption by reducing “the costs of fighting extortive corruption” (Brunetti & Weder, 2003, p. 1804).

Drury et al. explain that the citizens will not tolerate politicians’ involvement in corrupt activities, democratic elections enable the citizens to remove politicians, and free media will expose those who are involved in corrupt practices (Drury et al., 2006, p. 126). Based on these points, they argue that democracy will raise the cost of corrupt
practices. Since the risk for politicians to engage in corrupt activities exceeds the benefit, they are less likely to engage in corruption (Drury et al., 2006). Eicher, Garcia-Penalosa and van Ypersele confirm this argument by explaining that the attainment of free and fair elections leads to the establishment of the “elite challenging” structure, which effectively eliminates corruption (Eicher et al., 2009, p. 216). They argue that the politicians that are revealed to be corrupt will face a lower probability of reelection, while those who are perceived to be honest are more likely to be reelected, and the increased media scrutiny provides an effective channel through which the voters shape such perceptions (Eicher et al., 2009, p. 216). Eicher et al. also point out the role of an enhanced popular access to education in creating more informed electorates. According to this hypothesis, a combination of active media scrutiny and free and fair elections facilitates a bottom-up process where citizens are empowered to remove corrupt politicians out of their offices.

The scholars who uphold this hypothesis entrench their argument by employing a deductive method by which they test and validate this hypothesis by conducting quantitative analyses. Brunetti and Weder (2003) analyze the role of free press and media scrutiny in the reduction of corruption. They conduct a cross-national analysis that compares the levels of corruption and freedom of the press. This analysis groups countries according to their level of freedom of press and incorporates additional factors such as bureaucratic capabilities, engagement in free trade. The result of this analysis shows that less corrupt countries tend to enjoy greater freedom of press and media (Brunetti & Weder, 2003, pp. 1810-1811).

Eicher et al. conduct a statistical analysis on the impact of the implementation of democratic elections and the enhancement of popular education on the level of corruption
in countries in Africa and Latin America. The result of this study shows a correlation between democratic elections, improvement in education, and reduction of corruption (Eicher et al., 2009, p. 224). This finding is confirmed by another analysis conducted by Drury et al., which looks into the interaction between democracy, level of educational attainment, economic performance and the extent of corruption of over 100 countries. The result of this analysis provides an “almost uniform support” for their hypothesis, by showing positive correlations between the higher levels of democracy and educational attainment and low corruption and high economic growth (Drury et al., 2006, p. 129).

Drury et al. find that democracy also mitigates the negative impact of corruption on economy, by showing the statistical data that the democratic countries tend to show better economic performance than non-democratic counterparts with similar levels of corruption (Drury et al., 2006, p. 131). Treisman’s analysis, which views the correlations between corruption and democracy, also provides a similar result. He also notes that there is a cultural implication to this tendency, by explaining that the majority of the least corrupt countries are characterized by the prominence of Protestants in their population (Treisman, 2000). According to Treisman, Protestantism upholds more individualistic and egalitarian principles than the other religions, and its history of opposing the state authority has founded a desirable ground for “monitoring and denouncing” the abuses by the elites and public servants (Treisman, 2000, p. 403).

Kotera et al. conduct two quantitative analyses. First, they attempt to test a neo-liberal hypothesis that the state’s excessive intervention in the market nurtures corruption. They conduct a cross-country analysis of 82 countries, which explores the relationship between the extent of government intervention, measured as the share of government
expenditure in GDP and the levels of corruption over the period from 1995 to 2008 (Kotera et al., 2012, p. 2343). The result of this analysis shows no causal link between the government expenditure and the extent of corruption, challenging the neo-liberal explanation of corruption. Secondly, they also conduct another empirical analysis whose result shows that democracy enhances the government’s capability to combat corruption. They identify the strength of “monitoring mechanism”, which consists of free and fair elections and media scrutiny, as the most crucial factor that affects the government’s performance in management of corruption (Kotera et al., 2012, p. 2341). Based on these findings, they argue that corruption is managed more effectively in democratic countries. In sum, according to their perspective, consolidation of democracy (media scrutiny and competitive elections) facilitates informed decisions of the voters, creating an effective elite-challenging structure, which assists a bottom-up process of reducing corruption. The empirical evidence and the findings acquired through their quantitative analyses indicating a correlation between democracies and lower levels of corruption make their argument convincing.

**Challenge and Limitation to the Democracy-Reduces-Corruption Theory:**

There are mainly four limitations to the theory that upholds the attainment of democratic elections and free media as an essential factor for the reduction of corruption. First, the empirical studies used to support this theory do not illustrate a robust causal link between the dependent and independent variables. For instance, Eicher et al. (2009) do not provide adequate explanations on individual cases to articulate how the adoption of the democratic elections and the enhanced political awareness has reduced the level of
corruption in specific contexts. Therefore, there is a possibility of equifinality in relationship between the presence of elite challenging structure and the reduction of corruption; that is, there may be other factors leading to the same outcome.

Second, the scholars who uphold this theory do not take into account the deviant cases. In their analysis, Brunetti and Weder present a graph, where x-axis shows the level of corruption and the y-axis shows the level of freedom of the press, and each country is shown as a dot in the graph and located according to their level of freedom of press and the level of corruption. While this graph shows a general tendency that the countries with low level of corruption have free media, it also shows that there are a few countries that do not fit to this tendency (Brunetti & Weder, 2003, p. 1811). They do not explain these deviant cases: they do not present a sufficient explanation as to what these countries are and why there are countries that have achieved low level of corruption without the presence of free media.

Third, all scholars representing this perspective commonly identify additional or complementary factors in their analyses between the extent of democracy and the level of corruption. Kotera et al. look into the proportion of government expenditure in aggregate economy of each country; Treisman acknowledges the cultural and historical factors that effectively constrain the authority of the elites; and Eicher et al. point to the role of education in enhancing the effect of democracy in eliminating corruption. Since they do not isolate each independent variable and their effect on the level of corruption, they do not quantify the precise impact of the democratic election and free media on the level of corruption in the countries of their analyses. Therefore, the internal validity of their analyses is limited.
Finally, all arguments launched by these authors are based on the premise that the public and the citizens are always opposed to corrupt activities. For the cases of Africa, people are often apathetic to or in some cases even supportive of political corruption. This is a valid fact to be considered given that the scholars such as Olivier de Sardan (1999) and Hyden (2013) explain that corruption has become interwoven into the individuals’ lives so deeply that both the elites and citizens have relied on corrupt practices not only for their personal profit, but also for their subsistence. Also, as Olivier de Sardan (1999) explains, the inflexibility of such social circumstances that favour corruption has prevented the verbal denouncement of corruption from evolving into effective popular pressure calling for sincere attempts to combat this issue. Therefore, particular socio-economic structures and political arrangements of many countries in Africa challenge the generalizability of the perspective that holds that democracy reduces corruption.

**Theory Two: “Political Will is an Indispensable Factor for Reduction of Corruption”**

Scholars representing another theoretical approach challenge the causality between democracy and the reduction of corruption. They view corruption as a symptom of the lack of political will of the leaders to solidify the rules regulating corrupt activities. They argue that corruption persists even if democracy is established if the leaders are not determined to combat this issue. Bierchenk conducts an analysis of the case of Benin, where its transition from one-party rule to democracy in 1989 established the elite challenging structure, but failed to alter the deficiency in governance, thus perpetuating the issue of corruption along with other socio-economic impediments (Bierchenk, 2009).
The actualization of elections in Benin has promoted popular check on the power of the political leaders. President Kerekou was removed from the office in the first democratic election, which was internationally recognized as “fair and free” (Bierchenk, 2009, p. 338). There has also been free media, which regularly scrutinize corruption cases without political interventions (Bierchenk, 2009, p. 341). However, the establishment of democracy was followed by a series of revelations and persistence of political and financial corruption scandals, due to the weak government and the limited bureaucratic capabilities (Bierchenk, 2009, p. 346).

John S. T. Quah’s analysis of successful reduction of corruption in Singapore and Hong Kong also advocates this perspective. His analysis shows that the political commitment of the leaders, which solidifies the state and bureaucratic structure, is the most crucial factor for an effective reduction of corruption. First, leaders’ determination to combat corruption led to the application of strict policies and the autonomy of the anti-corruption agencies, which promoted an effective and rigorous enforcement of laws and regulations. Secondly, by guaranteeing high salaries for politicians and public servants, they effectively curtailed their incentives to engage in corruption (Quah, 1994, p. 398). He asserts that in both cases, these measures were driven by the political will and a strong commitment of the leaders to eliminate corruption, which was necessitated by their need to secure their government. The actual commitment of the political leaders resulted in their self-restraining attitudes, and it promoted the impartiality in investigations, persecutions and punishment of the individuals who engage in corrupt activities. He confirms this point by citing the case of the persecution of a high-ranking politician in Singapore for engaging in corruption at the early stage of the campaign (Quah, 1994, p.
Based on this fact, Quah views the political will and actual commitment of the leaders to engage in reduction of corruption as an indispensible factor and argues that the leaders’ failure to demonstrate their commitment results in the perpetuation of corruption.

Abdulai (2009) confirms Quah’s argument by presenting how the lack of leaders’ will perpetuates the issue of corruption. He conducts a comparative analysis of Ghana, Singapore and Hong Kong, and attempts to assess why Ghana has not succeeded in combating corruption in spite of the implementation of an anti-corruption campaign. He argues that the critical difference between Ghana and the other two cases is the extent of the leaders’ commitment to tackle the issue of corruption. The lack of leaders’ political will has induced two major limitations. First, the position of the anti-corruption agencies in Ghana has remained subordinate to the President, and these agencies are not capable of prosecuting corruption cases without the approval of the executive branch of the government. He describes these institutions as “toothless bulldogs that only bark without biting” (Abdulai, 2009, p. 400). Second, the lack of leaders’ commitment to prevent the public servants from engaging in corruption has led to their underpayment. The inadequacy of the salaries of public servants has marred an effective removal of their incentives to receive bribes (Abdulai, 2009). Abdulai explains that the salaries for the public servants in Ghana are lower than their counterparts in other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with comparable size of economy (Abdulai, 2009, p. 404). Like Quah, Abdulai argues that Singapore and Hong Kong implemented rigorous anti-corruption policies through autonomous anti-corruption agency and incrementing the salaries of public officials to reduce corruption (Abdulai, 2009, p. 403). Since Ghana lacks the leaders with political commitment, these two essential factors have remained insufficient,
resulting in the persistence of corruption. Abdulai views the government’s attempt to
discourage the anti-corruption institutions from investigating, reporting and prosecuting
corrupt politicians as a critical sign of the lack of commitment of the political elites to
combat corruption (Abdulai, 2009, p. 407). Based on this fact, Abdulai dismisses the role
of democracy in reducing corruption by arguing that although democratically elected
leaders may make statements on eradicating corruption, very little progress will be made
if the leaders fail to demonstrate their commitment and political will to bring an end to

Bierschenk’s analysis of the case of Benin also validates the significance of
political will. His analysis shows that the persistence of the state’s weak regulation
capacities and the underpayment of salaries of public servants are the factors that
perpetuated the issue of corruption in this country. Bierchenk applies the term “rentier
state” to describe the cause of lack of political will. Benin’s dependency on foreign aid
resulted in the situation in which the political elites are no longer accountable to the
citizens, depriving them of the opportunity to demonstrate their political will to combat
corruption (Bierschenk, 2009, p. 346-347). This structural weakness was accelerated by
the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Program, which induced the reduction of the
public spending (Bierschenk, 2009, p. 349). Therefore, the arguments by Bierschenk and
Abdulai illuminate how the lack of political will of the leaders results in the perpetuation
of the fundamental basis of corruption.

**Applicability of Singapore/Hong Kong Model: Return to Democracy?**
The theory which focuses on the role of the leaders’ political will in combating corruption is highly persuasive, since it is substantiated by the cases which show how the presence of such a factor has promoted the reduction of corruption and how the absence thereof has resulted in the perpetuation of corruption. One critical drawback to the arguments by Quah (1994) and Abdulai (2009) is that the terms “political will” and “commitment” are vague, since there is no standard or yardstick which quantifies such factors. Furthermore, neither of these authors provides argument on the sufficient and necessary circumstances which promote the emergence of an effective leadership, which is capable of demonstrating strong political will and commitment to tackle corruption. Therefore, a question arises on the applicability of their theoretical model to the cases of Africa. The relevance of this question is also validated by the peculiarity of the features of both Singapore and Hong Kong; these two countries are geographically small and densely populated city-states. It remains unclear as to whether this model can be replicated in the context of sub-Saharan African countries, many of which present contrasting features; they are geographically large, sparsely populated and socially diverse, and patronage or clientelism can be an important tool to maintain the integrity of these societies. Indeed, Quah admits that the geographic and demographic characteristics of Singapore and Hong Kong contributed to the success of the campaigns by facilitating administrative coordination and promoting centralized control by the government and anti-corruption agencies (Quah, 1994, p. 392). He also argues that the cases of Singapore and Hong Kong can be replicated in other countries, if the political leaders attain and demonstrate their political commitment to combat corruption.
The analysis conducted by Theobald and Williams (1999) validates the applicability of Singapore/Hong Kong model to the other countries. They analyze the case of Botswana, which is characterized by the lowest level of corruption in Africa, and how it successfully reduced corruption. They argue that the success in an effective containment of corruption in Botswana was the result of the actual commitment of the political leaders in the reduction of corruption. The establishment of the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC) in Botswana was the adoption of Hong Kong model of anti-corruption agencies (Theobald & Williams, 1999, p. 119). They argue that the strong political commitment of the leaders to combat corruption contributed to the autonomy and substantial discretion of this agency in investigating and prosecuting the corrupt leaders. According to Theobald and Williams, such commitment is also reflected in the substantial government spending in education, healthcare and housing for public servants, which enhanced the morale and bureaucratic capabilities of public officials in this country (Theobald & Williams, 1999, p.127-128). They argue that this extensive state investment resulted in the establishment of a solid and strong anti-corruption agency, which was “extremely well-resourced”, and the qualified public servants with adequate level of salaries supported the success in the containment of corruption (Theobald & Williams, 1999, p. 127). Therefore, Theobald and Williams’ analysis consolidates the theory which views the leaders’ political commitment to combat corruption as an essential factor for the reduction of corruption.

However, the authors who analyze the case of Botswana also note the role of democracy in generating the political will of the leaders. Theobald and Williams point out the fact that since its independence in 1966, Botswana has been widely known as the
most democratic country in Africa with multi-party government and with no experience of military rule, unlike other countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Theobald & Williams, 1999, p. 127). John D Holm (2000) draws three features of the politics of Botswana: 1) democratic governance, which facilitated a dialogue between the citizens and the politicians 2) institutionalization of democratic governance, which led to the leaders’ conformity to the rules and 3) the presence of media, which actively conveyed critique on policies and constrained the power of the political elites (Holm, 2000, pp. 290-294).

Bamidele Olowu draws a causal path in which these features facilitated the leaders’ attainment of the political will. He points out the role of the media in the revelation of corruption scandals of the political leaders in causing a widespread criticism from the citizens. Due to this popular pressure, the leaders were incentivized to create a strong and autonomous watchdog institution to control corruption (Olowu, 2006, p. 607).

Botswana’s political system, where media actively expose corruption cases and the citizens are empowered to challenge the position of the corrupt politicians, played a critical role in facilitating the leaders’ attainment of political will to tackle the issue of corruption.

**Limitation to the Botswana Model:**

Although the case of Botswana presents a robust correlation between democracy and the creation of a desirable environment for the leader to demonstrate his commitment to combat corruption, its historical and socio-cultural peculiarity in the context of African politics challenges the applicability of this model to different settings. Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle explain that a great number of scholars acknowledge that the
society of Botswana has historically been stable and there is a deep historical root of its
democratic governance (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997, p. 38). Daron Acemoglu, Simon
Johnson and James A. Robinson explore the historical peculiarity of the process of state
formation in Botswana and analyze its relevance to its economic performance. Their
argument is that the longue durée of integration of minorities into the mainstream culture
and minimal colonial interference in Botswana allowed the development of an effective
leadership and accountable bureaucratic systems, which fostered accumulation of wealth
and sustained growth of per capita income. Acemoglu et al. explain that Botswana had
undergone a process of creating a relatively inclusive and democratic political system in
its pre-colonial period, promoting the common national identity among both the majority
Tswana and the minority groups in this country⁹ (Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2002,
p. 11). Such a process was not disrupted by its colonization by the British. Minimal
colonial interference in the governance allowed a sustained consolidation of the
democratic rule in Botswana, and such a process continued after its independence
(Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2002, pp. 5-11). This cumulative process contributed
to the development of a stable and a relatively peaceful society (Acemoglu, Johnson &
Robinson, 2002). According to Acemoglu et al., this became a basis of the stable and
effective democracy in Botswana, which allowed its leaders to implement far-sighted
economic policies that facilitated development.

As de Waal (2009) states, it is the salience of risks of violent conflicts that
necessitates illicit and informal political transactions, which inevitably foster corruption.

⁹ Promotion of common national identity and centralization of the state functions were also assisted
by the external threats posed by the Boers. Acemoglu et al. highlight the impact of the Battle of
Dimewe in 1852, where the Tswana succeeded in halting the invasion of the Boers, on the rise of
nationalism, which played a crucial role in uniting the Batswana against a common enemy
Acemoglu et al. explain that the absence of such risks in Botswana has enabled its leaders to preside over its economy and reconcile social issues through legal and democratic means (Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2002). The absence of risks has also reduced the opportunity for the leaders to resort to illicit transfer of resources to maintain security. From this fact, Botswana’s success in utilizing democratic systems to combat corruption can be attributed to the continuity of democratic institutions and social stability. The leaders’ preference for maintaining their positions have resulted in their voluntary commitment to anti-corruption campaign in Botswana\(^\text{10}\), because the failure to meet the popular demands and expectations would jeopardize their relations with the citizens. The political realities of the rest of sub-Saharan Africa present a contrasting image to the case of Botswana. Unlike Botswana, most countries in this region have been deprived of an opportunity to establish and consolidate the state structures, which would preside over the issues stemming from the diversities in ethnic and tribal identities. Since their borders were arbitrarily drawn and their state formation processes were either neglected or destroyed by colonialism, these countries have been facing the risk of violent conflicts. The difference in the fundamental socio-political contexts between Botswana and the other countries in sub-Saharan Africa challenges the applicability of the causal path linking democracy, solidification of the leaders’ political will and the creation of an enabling environment for the reduction of corruption.

\(^\text{10}\)The historical roots of the elite-challenging culture in Botswana is traced to the “Kgotla” or public forums, which was regularly held by an assembly of adult males to discuss the public issues both at the national and communal levels. According to Acemoglu et al., it functioned as a means for commoners to criticize the leaders (Acemoglu et al., 2002, p. 10). This played a key role in maintaining accountability of the governing structure and it solidified the legitimacy of the state’s power.
Chabal and Daloz also challenge the generalizability of Botswana model in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Like Jackson and Rosberg (1984), they argue that the state and bureaucratic bodies in Africa are personalized and weakly institutionalized, harbouring informal and patrimonial relations. Establishment of democracy did not change these features. In such a system, the use of state resources continues to be personalized (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, pp. 33-37). Based on this point, Chabal and Daloz challenge the assumption that the adoption of multi-party elections in Africa is a sign of reduction in corruption, since the possibilities for the leaders to be re-elected rest on their capability to allocate resources to sustain patrimonial relations, and the citizens who receive the “spoils” the patrimonial distribution of wealth are not concerned with how such resources are extracted (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, p. 36). They explain that the adoption of competitive elections in a number of countries in Africa has only brought superficial changes and left the fundamental basis of corruption intact: during elections, the issues of combating corruption, political agenda and the candidates’ political ideologies fail to receive particular attention from the voters (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, p. 37). It is the diminishing of the leaders’ legitimacy caused by their failure to act as “Big Men” who provide resource to their supporters that gives rise to the influence of the opponents and causes the defeat of the incumbents\textsuperscript{11} (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, p. 37). Therefore, despite the adoption of elections, which is a potential tool to challenge and replace the leaders, many countries in Africa have failed to promote the removal of corruption due to the apathy among the citizens toward corrupt activities. They failed to

\textsuperscript{11}Chabal and Daloz consolidate this argument by analyzing the cases of Zambia and Benin, where the electorates succeeded in replacing the political leader in the presidential elections (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, pp. 36-37).
produce popular pressure to promote the political will and the actual commitment of the leaders to combat corruption. The analyses conducted by these scholars provide the view that in many countries in Africa, there is a symbiosis between democratic instruments of competitive elections, free media scrutiny and extensive corruption.

**Corruption in Developmental Perspective:**

Corruption is often discussed in the context of development studies. Although it is unquestionable that corruption significantly affects the economy, there is a divergence among scholars in their perceptions of how it affects a society and its developmental path. There are two major perspectives with regards to the developmental effect of corruption. While one focuses exclusively on the adverse impact of corruption, other perspective also assesses the circumstances in which a particular type of corruption alleviates social adversities and potentially produces benefits to a society.

**Does Corruption Cause Underdevelopment? - The Evils of Corruption:**

First, a group of scholars identify a strong correlation between the extent of corruption and underdevelopment. Transparency International quantifies the level of corruption and ranks countries according to the severity of corruption. According to the data published by this agency, the countries with high degree of corruption tend to face low Human Development Index. Daniel Egiegba Agbiboa highlights a correlation between corruption and underdevelopment. They refer to the empirical analysis conducted by Mauro and Tanzi on the effect of corruption on economic growth rates of a number of countries (Agbiboa, 2012). The result of this analysis shows that corruption
tends to impede development by promoting the culture of rent-seeking and truncating the state’s administrative capabilities (Agbiboa, 2012, p. 121). Agbiboa explores this theory by analyzing the case of Nigeria and argues that the severity of corruption has impeded socio-economic development of this country.

Corruption at the top, or the leaders’ embezzlement of the state’s coffer has stagnated the process of promoting development. It has truncated the state’s budget and offset a significant amount of fiscal resource necessary to implement development projects (Agbiboa, 2012). Abubakar Momoh and Paul Okojie elaborate this point by referring to the estimate that nearly £220 billion, which is six times as great as the amount of the aid money disbursed in the Marshal Plan, has been stolen in Nigeria since 1966 (Momoh & Okojie, 2007, p. 103). The embezzlement of public funds by the political leaders caused a deterioration of human capital and provision of public services. This is one of the major causes for the underpayment of civil servants. This proliferates petty corruption, since it encourages underpaid officials to seek illicit means to extract additional incomes such as extortion and bribery to compensate for their insufficient salaries (Agbiboa, 2012, p. 123). This results in great inequalities in provision of public services as only those who afford to bribe can receive services and it places the financial burdens of paying bribes on the citizens.

Momoh and Okojie (2006) note the contemporary nature of corruption and how it exacerbated the complexity of this issue and magnified the amount of resources withdrawn from the public coffer. They argue that with the advance in technology and the recent rise of globalization, which facilitated financial transactions on the international scale, political corruption in Nigeria has come to involve complex networks
of foreign and domestic banks and development agencies (Momoh & Okojie, 2007). The lack of effective sanctions to this issue on the global scale has made it difficult to retrieve the money diverted from the budget to the private pockets of the political elites (Momoh & Okojie, 2007). The fact that the elites engage in corrupt practices with impunity contributes to the prevalence of corruption by affecting the mentality of the citizens. Agbiboa confirms this point by describing how the leaders’ corrupt practices have been replicated by the citizens in Nigeria and how corruption has become “a way of life” in this country and it induced a widespread perception among the citizens that “being honest and law abiding does not pay” (Agbiboa, 2012, p. 118). The apathy of citizens has led to the banality of corruption magnifying the scale and severity of this issue. Thus, their argument illuminates the enormity of the costs of corruption and it also shows how it spreads throughout the society due to the apathy of the public.

The scholars who focus on the adverse impact of corruption commonly argue that the extensive level of corruption induces an impediment to economic development and accentuates inequalities and social injustice. As shown above, they tend to explore the quantitative data which shows a negative correlation between the extent of corruption and the level of economic development, and confirm this theory by conducting specific case studies. Their argument is consolidated by the case studies which illustrate in detail the cascade of effects of corruption: it shows how corruption at the top induces petty corruption, and its adverse effects on the economy and the behaviour of the political leaders, public servants and the citizens. Based on these facts, they argue that it is an urgent task for the leaders to tackle this issue to promote development. Although it is obvious that the least corrupt countries enjoy greater economic performance and the
countries facing an extensive level of corruption also confront underdevelopment, this fact is not sufficient to support that there is causality between the low level of corruption and development. Therefore, a question still remains as to whether the reduction of corruption leads to the betterment of economy and the higher standard of living.
Case of Ethiopia:

To explore this question, it is necessary to analyze whether the lower level of corruption is more conducive for development. The case of post-revolutionary Ethiopia under Mengistu Haile Mariam provides a critical example to explore this question. Ethiopia has historically faced with economic underdevelopment and the task of attaining national unity. Christopher S. Clapham argues that in the pre-revolutionary period, it had been attempted to resolve these issues by fortifying and utilizing a centralized and efficient state system and bureaucratic bodies. The revolutionary force led by Mengistu Haile Mariam took over the political power in 1974 and accelerated this bureaucratic expansion. This process assisted and was assisted by the broadening of the tax base and an increase in the tax revenue (Clapham, 1988, pp. 103-106). The revolutionary government of Ethiopia attempted to promote development based on the production and export of coffee as a major cash crop and the nationalization of major industries. They also attempted to gain rural support by implementing a land reform. However, the state tightly controlled the economic activities, and most of its surplus was used to sustain the bureaucratic functions and the military (Clapham, 1988, p. 126). The inadequacy in investment in industries also caused a stagnation of the economy (Clapham, 1988, p. 148). These policies exacerbated the impact of the famine; the land reform inhibited the mobility of rural population and became a major cause for overpopulation in rural areas, which exacerbated the impact of drought and the decline of food production per capita; the state’s control over agricultural production and the lack of import of agricultural commodities became an obstacle to an effective alleviation of food shortages (Clapham,
Clapham’s argument is that the state’s tight control and centralization of production, assisted by the capable and rigid bureaucratic structures, exacerbated the economic adversities in Ethiopia.

Clapham highlights the characteristics peculiar to the post-revolutionary Ethiopia in the context of political economy of Africa. First, it presented the “coincidence” of “one of Africa’s most powerful states” and competent bureaucracy with one of its poorest economies” (Clapham, 1988, p. 243). Second, the political landscape of Ethiopia was also marked by the rigidity of the rules and the public servants’ observance of such rules. Although the public servants occasionally neglected or manipulated the rules, Clapham explains that the extent of corruption was kept relatively low\textsuperscript{12} (Clapham, 1988, p. 131). Other countries in Africa present opposite characteristics: they are faced with the weak state systems and lack of rigidity in enforcement of the rules. The obedience of the elites to the rules and counter-productive economic policies have become major factors for the impoverishment of its population, which eventually resulted in the failure to attain the national unity and the collapse of the regime (Clapham, 1988). Therefore, the Ethiopian case shows that low level of corruption and extensive poverty are not mutually exclusive. This case also shows that the inflexibility of the regulations is one of the major factors that led to economic underperformance of this country, indicating that corruption and

\textsuperscript{12} Economy of post-revolutionary Ethiopia is characterized by the establishment of “kebelle”, which functioned as communes and a distribution system for peasants and urban dwellers (Clapham, 1988, 131). Kebelles provided benefits to their members, the most significant example of whom is the provision of ration card, which allowed the members to purchase goods and commodities at lower price than the market (Clapham, 1988, p. 146). A difference in prices provided opportunities for corruption. Clapham notes that the rumors of officials who manipulated the dual pricing system of commodities to attain private gains (they did so by buying goods at kebelle price and selling them at the market price to private traders). However, he explains that “corruption does [did] not attain the level at which it would break down into farce” (Clapham, 1988, p. 146).
illicit exchange between public officials and citizens to circumvent such rules could have alleviated the adverse effect of the counterproductive economic policy.

“Corruption Can Occasionally Be Beneficial”: Existence of Malignant Corruption and Corruption of Benign Nature:

Second, another group of scholars illuminate a number of benign effects of corruption on socio-economy of a society. Huntington, who conceptualizes the prevalence of corruption as one prominent feature of a changing society, argues that there are corrupt practices that promote development. The illicit acts to circumvent complex and strict regulations promote economic activities, and he argues that radical steps to regulate the corrupt practices and the attempts to force the public servants to obey strict rules only exacerbate economic and social adversities. He argues: “in terms of economic growth, the only thing worse than a society with rigid, overcentralized, dishonest bureaucracy is one with a rigid, overcentralized, honest bureaucracy” (Huntington, 1968, p. 69). Aforementioned case of Ethiopia, where the rigidity of bureaucracy has exacerbated the impact of economic underdevelopment, robustly substantiates this statement.

There is evidence showing the enormity of the amount of financial resources embezzled and there is a convincing argument that if such resources had been used for developmental purposes, it would have greatly assisted economic enhancement and promotion of equity. Mushtaq Husain Khan critiques such a view by arguing that it only looks at the immediate cost of embezzlement of public resources and bribery. He argues that this approach is inadequate in addressing a number of critical and more fundamental problems faced by developing countries in their transitions to more productive societies.
Hasty attempts to remove corruption may result in the opposite outcome: it may “hinder the construction of more effective developmental policies that are necessary for sustainable reductions in corruption” (Khan, 2006, p. 201). He argues in any case of corruption, there are both the process and the outcome, and there are acts that are corrupt in process but beneficial in the outcome.

In his analysis, Khan acknowledges two types of corruption that inhibit development. First, predatory extortions by public officials are harmful and impose a fiscal burden on the citizens in bribe payment and cause unequal distribution of public services. Second, the type of corruption stemming from the state’s dysfunctional interventions in economic activities also stagnates development, since it protects inefficient industries (Khan, 2006, p. 209). Alternatively, there are illicit conducts that may alleviate the strains and contribute to development. First, regulations associated with protection of domestic industry create a ground in which corruption becomes prevalent. Although political leaders receive bribes in return for the provision of protection or granting monopoly to individuals or firms, a positive effect can be expected “if public officials transfer resources to make decisions to raise productivity” (Khan, 2006, p. 207). Secondly, corruption resulting from illicit financial transfers that facilitates socio-political stability is a process achieved through the provision of “preferential access to resources for emerging capitalists” to avoid conflicts (Khan, 2006, p. 209). Huntington also describes this aspect of corruption as irregular or illicit transactions aimed at integrating the interests of particular groups into politics (Huntington, 1968). Khan confirms de Waal’s description of corruption that it is a consequence of utilization of patron-client networks between the state and particular groups in a society to avoid conflicts and such
acts are encouraged by the lack of alternative means to achieve stability (Khan, 2006, p. 215). Khan’s argument is that there are forms of corruption with developmentally positive outcomes. This challenges the viability of the attempts to reduce or remove corruption without the assessment of its political circumstances and careful attention to the outcomes of such acts.

Question and Validation of the Case-Study:

It is true that corruption is costly and it seems valid that it has often been a great obstacle to development. However, the case of Ethiopia reveals that the low level of corruption does not necessarily promote development. Corruption is a contextualized phenomenon, whose nature and impacts are affected by the social and political circumstances. Khan (2006) argues that it is the political surroundings that affect the nature of corruption in a way that facilitates development. Therefore, rather than assessing the impact of corruption on development, it is more fruitful to address the interwoven nature of corruption by analyzing how particular political events have shaped the nature of corruption. Such an approach enables one to assess the prospects for socio-political development in particular settings. In order to explore this topic, it is essential to analyze how the government has approached this issue within the framework of a specific political system and how such attempts affected the nature of corruption and its effect on a society. Although it is not the intention of this paper to launch a normative argument.

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13 Khan argues that the existence of a developmental state that is capable of intervening in the economic process and the market in manners that facilitate the development of domestic industry and maintain the public order as the most critical factor for prevalence of benign corruption (Khan, 2006).
that corruption must be eradicated, it is valid to analyze the attempts made to combat corruption due to the following reason.

Authors such as Treisman (2000), Brunetti and Wedar (2003) and Kotera, Okada and Samreth (2012) identify the correlation between democratic governance to the reduction of corruption. However, political realities in Africa challenge this correlation. Many countries in Africa have implemented campaigns to combat corruption within the frameworks of democracy (Adebanwi, 2013, p. 4). Despite such attempts, these countries are still characterized by the extensive and widespread corruption. As stated above, scholars point out that the cultural and political factors that are particular to the context of African politics have inhibited the causal link between democratization and reduction of corruption (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Olivier de Sardan, 1999; De Waal, 2009). Although such a perspective illuminates the factors that perpetuate corruption, it does not adequately address the significance of the persistence of democracy and its cumulative impacts on the nature of corruption. Neither does it address the divergence in contextual dynamics among different countries within Africa.

Many countries in Africa have practiced democracy for a considerable time period. Significant number of these countries adopted democracy in 1980s and in 1990s (Bratton, 2007, p. 101). A survey conducted by Bratton on the popular perception of democracy

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14 In his analysis, Bratton utilizes the Afro-barometer of the citizens’ attitudes on governance, markets, and civil society in various countries in Africa (Bratton, 2007, p. 99). The result of these surveys shows that the majority of the citizens (62% of the people surveyed, and 75% of the informed citizens who fully understood the definition of democracy) prefer democracy over any other type of government (Madagascar and Tanzania are the only countries that do not fit to this tendency), and that 73% of the respondents rejected military rule (Bratton, 2007, p. 100-101). Although there has been a slight decline in confidence in democracy over the previous years of the surveys, Bratton explains that Africans generally accept the values of democracy (Bratton, 2007, p. 102). Bratton interprets this tendency as a transition in the people's attitude toward democracy from
in twelve countries in Africa reveals the following tendencies; 1) a majority of citizens in Africa are becoming increasingly familiar to democratic governance; 2) and they prefer this system to military or other authoritarian regimes (Bratton, 2007, pp. 99-103). Given the persistence of democracy in Africa and the citizens’ affinity and familiarity with this system, there are two questions on; 1) how the cumulative process of persistence of democracy has affected the political landscape and the role of corruption in such a process; and 2) whether this process is beginning to transform the behaviour of the elites and their approach to corruption.

Nigeria presents the most prominent case to explore these questions. Since the military rule was terminated and the popular elections were re-introduced in 1999, Nigeria has experienced more than fifteen years of undisturbed democratic rule. Although there have been rises in militias and insurgencies, these groups have never grown to the extent of challenging the governance (Gore & Pratten, 2003, p. 211). This persistence of democracy in Nigeria for an unprecedented time-span presents a contrast to the preceding decades of the short-lived attempts to establish democracy, which were terminated by coups and military rules. Shortly after the re-introduction of democracy, the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) was established to tackle the issue of corruption (Adebanwi, 2013, p. 4). Despite these facts, Nigeria continues to be plagued with extensive and widespread corruption. Application of de Waal’s argument facilitates the following explanation. The political reality of Nigeria is characterized by the presence and proliferation of militias, insurgencies and tribalism. These factors have raised the risks in the political market and contributed to the persistence of volatility, which has

the “honeymoon” period to the state of the “sober” recognition of democracy as “imperfect, but still better than the alternatives” (Bratton, 2007, p. 103)
perpetuated the informal institutions and patronage networks. However, this narrative does not adequately address the significance and the cumulative impact of more than fifteen years of democratic governance on the nature of corruption.

Throughout the history of Nigeria, corruption among the political leaders has given a pretext for the termination of democracy. For instance, Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, who plotted the coup in 1966 that terminated the first civilian regime, justified this attempt by emphasizing the necessity to rid Nigeria of corruption. Nzeogwu announced to the citizens the necessity to remove the “irresponsible and opportunistic politicians and incompetent and corrupt civil servants” and “restore respectability, professionalism, transparency and accountability” of the politics in Nigeria (Agbiboa, 2014, p. 396). In the current regime, despite the persistence of corruption, democracy has not been toppled. Furthermore, there is a coexistence of two contradictory phenomena. On the one hand, the leaders in Nigeria have established the anti-graft agency aimed at combating corruption. On the other hand, they continue to rely on the patrimonial networks to secure their positions. Therefore, it is important to analyze the symbiosis of these phenomena and assess how the persistence of democracy has affected such coexistence. In order to explore these inquiries, it is essential to analyze the activities of the EFCC, Nigeria’s anti-graft agency in the volatile political circumstances and their interactions with the political elites.

Exploration of this topic is aimed at assessing the following points: 1) how the elites’ contest for power within the framework of democracy has affected the performance of the EFCC; 2) whether this anti-graft agency has been functioning in a manner that promotes the establishment of the rule of law; 3) if there are particular
patterns of the leaders’ behaviour in their attempts to demonstrate their stance to combat corruption within the framework of democracy while facing the tasks of maintaining their positions amidst the volatile political environment. Assessment of these points is crucial in understanding the political dynamism surrounding the interactions between the leaders whose tasks inevitably involve corruption and the institution aimed at regulating such practices. Identification of patterns of the leaders’ behaviour in sustaining democracy in a volatile environment will enable one to assess the prospects for the future development of democratic governance in Nigeria and the role of corruption in such a process.
Part 3: Case Study


Nigeria is arguably one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. Its boundaries were drawn arbitrarily by the colonial rulers, juxtaposing a great number of ethnic, regional and communal entities without adequate reconciliations. Today, there are estimated 250 ethnic groups in this country (Siollun, 2009, pp. 11-12). The three largest groups among these are the Hausa-Fulani\textsuperscript{15}, who are often referred as the Northerners, the Yorubas in the Southwest and the Igbos in the Southeast (Siollun, 2009, p. 12). The cleavages between these three groups are the most crucial factor that accelerated the adversities that caused the disintegration of Nigeria in its early stages. When Nigeria became independent in 1960 as a federal republic, its leaders attempted to establish a political system modeled after the British Westminster style parliamentary democracy (Siollun, 2009, p. 11). This attempt was inhibited by the ethnic rivalries and alleged tribalism in gaining access to the state resources and the positions in the government. The Northern elites assumed a leading role in the politics, and both the Igbos and the Yorubas were disaffected by the predominance of the Northerners (Fashola, 1999, pp. 92-93).

Shortly after its independence, Nigeria became stricken by widespread corruption, electoral violence and civil unrest. The incompetence of the politicians in solving these issues caused widespread disillusionment of the people toward the civilian rule. Amidst such circumstances, Nigeria’s first democratic regime, known as the First Republic, was overthrown in January 1966, when a group of military officers led by Chukwuma Kaduna

\textsuperscript{15} Hausa and Fulani are two separate ethnic groups. However, frequent inter-marriage and cultural integration and assimilation between these two groups have made the distinctions between them less conspicuous (Siollun, 2009, p. 12).
Nzeogwu plotted a coup in which they assassinated the civilian leaders including prime minister Tafawa Balewa (Siollun, 2009, p. 27).

Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo General, defeated this attempted coup and established the first military rule in Nigeria’s history. The citizens perceived the military as the only state apparatus immune to tribalism and corruption (Siollun, 2009, p. 69). Therefore, there was an initial optimism and popular support toward this new regime. The leadership of Ironsi and his attempts to overcome tribalism disproportionately affected the Northerners. Ironsi overturned the privileges that had hitherto been enjoyed by the Northern elites. This antagonized the Northerners, who feared the Igbo domination both in the realms of economy and politics. This triggered another coup plotted by the Northerners. A group of the Northern military officers assassinated Ironsi and placed Yakubu Gowon as the new military leader who would represent their interests (Siollun, 2009, pp. 109-112). Gowon attributed tribalism to the strengths of the unity of three major groups and attempted to weaken such strengths by dividing these regions. As a result, the number of regions was increased from three to twelve (Siollun, 2009, p. 83). These events were followed by the exacerbation the antagonism between the Igbos and the rest of the federation. Civil discontents challenged the territorial integrity of the federation and culminated in 1967 with the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War, which is also known as the Biafran War. This occurred when an Igbo colonel Ojukwu declared the secession of the eastern part of Nigeria as the Republic of Biafra and an armed conflict.

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16 Soon after Ironsi was inaugurated, he implemented the Unification Decree No. 34, which aimed at abolishing the federal system and the regional quota systems in the allocation of government positions. A detailed description of this event is provided in the following pages.
erupted between the Biafrans and the Nigerian forces (Siollun, 2009, p. 167). The war lasted until 1970, when the Biafrans surrendered to the Nigerian forces.

The end of the civil war was followed by the oil boom and the establishment of economic statism (Siollun, 2009, p. 168). After the civil war, the oil wells in the Niger Delta, which were first discovered in 1956, became exploited widely, and there was a drastic growth in the export of oil. This allowed a remarkable inflow of money and “unprecedented and grandiose developmental construction projects to rapidly modernize Nigeria” (Siollun, 2009, p. 168). An extravagant government spending accelerated corruption among the military leaders. The rapid expansion in the scale of corruption and subsequent deterioration in the economic performance of Nigeria induced another coup that replaced Gowon regime in 1975 with a new military regime (Siollun, 2009, p. 174).

Shortly after his inauguration, Murtala Mohammed, the new military leader, was assassinated in another attempted coup in 1976. Mohammed’s deputy, Olusegun Obasanjo, counteracted and aborted this coup and became the new military leader (Siollun, 2009, p. 197-198). Obasanjo arrested those who plotted the coup, dismantled the military regime and actualized the popular election in 1979. In this election, Shehu Shagari became elected as the president. Shortly after its establishment, this new democratic regime, known as the Second Republic, became stricken by the allegations of corruption, electoral frauds and violence, a combination of which resulted in widespread popular disillusionment toward the underperformance of this new civilian government (Joseph, 1987, p. 159). As a result, the politics of the Second Republic quickly deteriorated into chaos and provided a ground for another coup in 1983. In this coup, General Muhammadu Buhari deposed the president and became the new military leader.
He launched a campaign to combat corruption and civic disorder, which were viewed as the cause for social and economic adversities in Nigeria. In this campaign, more than 3,000 top officials in the civil service, police and customs were removed from their offices, hundreds of former politicians were arrested and the money that had been stolen by the corrupt politicians under Shagari was seized (Diamond, 1988, p. 56). Although such measure was welcome by the citizens, Buhari quickly became unpopular for his lack of tolerance to criticism. Buhari’s intolerance to criticism resulted in the repression of civic freedom “with unprecedented harshness, arrogance and impunity” (Diamond, 1988, p. 56). Many journalists and politicians who expressed their dissent became imprisoned. This gross neglect of human rights and the oppression of civic freedom provoked “deep resentment” of the citizens against Buhari (Diamond, 1988, p. 57). Popular disaffection toward the Buhari regime became accentuated by its failure to revive Nigeria’s economy. Under Buhari, 50,000 public servants became unemployed, and unemployment in the private sector also became exacerbated, prolonging Nigeria’s economic recession (Diamond, 1988, p. 57). Amidst these circumstances, there was another coup that deposed Buhari. The elites who became disaffected by Buhari’s anti-corruption campaign orchestrated this coup, and General Ibrahim Babandiga became the new head of state in 1985 (Diamond, 1988, p.57).

The Babangida regime was characterized by the leniency toward corruption. He publicly renounced his predecessor for a brutal imposition of strict rules and regulations. Although he showed “more friendly disposition” than his predecessor, Babangida accelerated the issue of corruption and continued to regulate civic freedom (Falola, 1999, p. 13). In 1993, when these adversities became accentuated to the extent that he “lost
control” over such matters, he transferred power to an Interim National Government and appointed Ernest Shonekan as a civilian leader to govern the country (Falola, 1999, p. 13). Shonekan Regime was a short-lived civilian rule, and it is known as the Third Republic. Under this regime, Nigeria continued to be plagued with economic turmoil, and Shonekan failed to attain popular trust and confidence (Falola, 1999, p. 13). Sani Abacha deposed Shonekan in 1993 and established a new military regime. He appointed himself as the new military leader (Falola, 1999, p. 13). During the Abacha regime until his sudden death in 1998, Nigeria faced unprecedented levels of violence and predatory administration, which exacerbated social unrest and caused critical economic deterioration (Falola, 1999, p. 16). After Abacha’s death, Obasanjo presided over another shift to a civilian rule. He called for a democratic election in 1999. Obasanjo became the democratically elected president. He conducted economic and political reforms, and withdrew from power in 2007. Unlike the preceding regimes, this shift in leadership took place relatively peacefully and without disruption to the political system. As of 2015, this latest regime, known as the Fourth Republic, has maintained democratic governance for over fifteen years. Nigeria has conducted five presidential elections since 1999 to this day.

Although the Freedom House recognizes Nigeria today as only ‘partially free’\footnote{For more detail, see Freedom House 2015 data at https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#.VZ2Z_2CJndk}, there is no doubt that this country possesses two fundamental apparatus of democratic governance. First, Nigeria regularly holds popular elections and the elites’ contests for power is based on the party politics and popular votes. Secondly, the media actively criticize the politicians in Nigeria. These present a contrast to the previous military
regimes where both the freedom of the press and popular participation in politics were severely regulated.

**Nigerian Paradox: Democracy & Corruption 1960-1998:**

A closer look into the history of Nigeria and the leaders’ approach toward corruption illuminates a paradoxical image. There are two prominent features of the politics in the current Fourth Republic. On the one hand, democratization has not reduced corruption. On the other, corruption and robust criticisms against its extent and prevalence have not terminated the democratic system. These features are contrasted by the following tendencies of the preceding regimes.

First, for nearly four decades, the leaders of Nigeria have failed to establish and sustain democratic governance. As shown above, democracy is not new to Nigeria. At independence, the new political leaders, many of whom had received education in Britain or the United States, embraced the value of democracy in maintaining the territorial integrity of Nigeria, which is home to a great diversity of ethnic, tribal and communal entities (Diamond, 1988, p. 61). Their attempts to develop democracy were disrupted by the coup and the rise of the military regime. The political culture of Nigeria has always been in favour of democratic rule, and this tendency was not challenged by the rise of military regimes (Diamond, 1988, p. 44). According to Joseph, when the military officers suspended democracy and established authoritarian military regimes, such attempts were premised on their voluntary withdrawal from the politics and the re-establishment of democracy once they attained the social order (Joseph, 1987, p. 159). Diamond elaborates this fact by pointing out that the military leaders who failed to commit to this premise
were removed from power in subsequent coups (Diamond, 1988, p. 33). As explained above, both Gowon and Buhari, who either failed to conform to the promise to reestablish democracy or neglected the principle of civic freedom, became extremely unpopular among the citizens and were eventually forced to leave the office as a result of the subsequent military coups (Diamond, 1988, p. 57). This point is also substantiated by the fact that Obasanjo, the only military leader who abided by his promise to reestablish democracy, did not encounter coups. Despite the popular preference for democratic governance and the leaders’ aspirations to establish democracy, they had failed to maintain this system in the period prior to the establishment of the Fourth Republic in 1999.

Second, both under the civilian and military rules, accusation of corruption has been the repeating mantra for those who overthrew the incumbent regime to justify their actions. The rhetoric of combating corruption has played a significant role in the shift in the leadership. The military officers who initiated the January coup of 1966 viewed the civil unrest and violence as an outcome of the leaders’ abuse of their positions18 (Siollun, 2009, p. 30). Nzeogwu, the leader of this attempted coup, publicly expressed his “pathological hatred” against corruption and tribalism (Siollun, 2009, p. 37). Shortly after the coup was plotted, Nzeogwu made a radio announcement that it was their urgent task to rid Nigeria of corruption and corrupt political leaders. He addressed:

Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand 10 percent; those that seek to keep the countries divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers or VIPs at least, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before

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18 The plotters of the January coup of 1966 upheld strong ideological principles based on Socialism, which was becoming popular among the leaders in Africa (Siollun, 2009, p. 30).
international circles, those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds (Siollun, 2009, p. 55).

Coupled with the perceived necessity to contain violence and social disorder, the expression of their commitment to combat corruption gave a justifying ground for their attempt to topple the democratic regime\(^\text{19}\).

The oil boom of the 1970s has proven that the military officers were not immune to corruption. This case also exemplifies how the benefit of corruption to the political leaders obstructed the shift to democracy. The extravagant spending accelerated by the booming oil export facilitated a series of development projects whose costs were “massively inflated in a scam aimed at squeezing as much money a possible” (Siollun, 2009, p. 169). Wasteful administrations and the monopoly of fiscal resources by a handful of elites exacerbated inequality and impoverished the majority of the population. Gowon described this misallocation of the wealth as the “poverty in the midst of plenty” (Siollun, 2009, p. 169). Despite his awareness of how big-time corruption under his rule has subverted the economy, the benefit of corruption prevented him from taking an effective action against it (Joseph, 1987, p. 72). The benefit of corruption enjoyed by a handful of military leaders also prevented the reestablishment of democracy. Gowon neglected his own promise to return to civilian democratic rule by 1976. Siollun says that the oil wealth and corruption turned the political activity into a “tremendous opportunity for amassing wealth”, and it caused the reluctance of the leaders to return the power to the civilians and relinquish this opportunity (Siollun, 2009, p. 172).

\(^\text{19}\) It should also be noted that those who are involved in the coup of January 1966: Nzeogwu and other officers did not have an intention to become political leaders: their political thoughts were inspired by socialism, and they planned to place Obafemi Awolowo, who was perceived to share a similar political ideology, as the national leader (Siollun, 2009, p. 37).
Widespread corrupt practices provided a premise to justify the succeeding coup in 1975 in which Gowon was removed from power by a group of officers led by Murtala Mohammed. After Mohammed became the head of state, he prosecuted the military governors and other political elites who had engaged in corrupt practices under Gowon regime (Siollun, 2009, pp. 186-187). He publicly accused them for betraying “the trust and confidence” and neglecting “the ethics of their professions” (Siollun, 2009, p. 186). From this fact, it is seen that the rhetoric that denounces corruption has not only used to justify the suspension of democracy, but it also became exploited to justify the shift in the leadership within the military rule.

Malignancy of corruption and civil disorder under Shagari’s Second Republic also provided a premise for a group of officers to topple the democratic regime in the 1983 coup. After the transition from military rule to democracy in 1979, corruption and a lack of an effective legal system to restrain such conduct became increasingly prominent. As the civilian leaders mobilized the thugs and clandestine organizations to mobilize votes and political supports, social order deteriorated rapidly (Diamond, 1988, p. 66). The withdrawal of the military from political activities caused an absence of the function to maintain order during elections. Joseph explains that the 1979 election was acknowledged as the most peaceful election in Nigeria since independence, because it was staged by the military leaders, whose continued presence in politics kept this election orderly (Joseph, 1987, p. 156). Since the military ceased to be involved in political activities under the civilian regime, there was an exacerbation of violence and civil unrest (Joseph, 1987, p. 156). Gross social insecurity enhanced the privilege for the political leaders in remaining in power, as it became the only source of wealth and the means of
ensuring security. Under such circumstances, the “state power remained the primary locus of national wealth, the chief route of access to the resources and opportunities of class formation” (Diamond, 1988, p. 66). Prevalence of corruption in private sphere became increasingly prominent in this period, as the Structural Adjustment Programme, implemented to reduce Nigeria’s debt, truncated the state’s provision of subsidies and welfare (Joseph, 1987, p. 159). The scarcity of public resources and services accelerated the competition in gaining access to such resources (Joseph, 1987, p. 159). Diamond describes the economic reality of the Second Republic as “pirate capitalism”, where “access to, and manipulation of the government-spending process has become the golden gateway to fortune” replacing diligence as the basis of achieving entrepreneurial success (Diamond, 1988, p. 66). The prevalence and extent of both grand and petty corruptions further deteriorated the quality of the lives of the Nigerians. Democracy is the term conceived by the Nigerians not only as the system in which the leaders are elected to and removed from their positions through popular votes, but it is also aspired as the form of government that actualizes the betterment of their lives (Joseph, 1987, p. 159). During the Second Republic, there was a popular disillusionment with the government’s inabilities to fulfill this task. This gave rise to a call for the return of the military rule to “spare the Nigerian people further suffering at the hands of their elected representatives” and re-establish democracy once they resolved the political adversities (Joseph, 1987, p. 159). Therefore, the coup of 1983, plotted and launched by Buhari, was reciprocated with the unpopularity of the civilian government and the citizens’ resentment against rampant corruption. Popular perception of corruption and its adverse impacts provided a justifying ground for the military leaders to terminate democracy.
Allegations of corruption toppled the previous regimes, but not the current one:

As shown above, in the period from 1960 to 1999 combating corruption and disorder had been the rhetoric to justify the termination of democratic rule. In contrast, the current democratic system has persisted for an unprecedented duration in spite of the existence of corruption and widespread accusations of such conduct. Since Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn into power as the first democratically elected president in the Fourth Republic, Nigeria has maintained democracy for more than fifteen years and conducted five presidential elections. Although there has been a rise of insurgency and the militias that engage in violent activities, such factors have not grown to the extent of challenging the very existence of democracy. In March 2015, Nigeria has undergone a dramatic shift in the leadership through election, setting the first example of the incumbent president being unseated through a democratic process.

Shortly after the inauguration, Obasanjo proclaimed his intention to combat corruption. This statement was followed by the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, a watchdog institution to investigate and prosecute the individuals involved in corruption. Like in the preceding regimes, the leaders’ expressions of his commitment to combat corruption were not met with a sizable reduction of corruption. Instead, Nigeria today continues to be recognized as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, and there have been widespread media scrutiny of politicians and other individuals involved in corruption (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 5). However, unlike the preceding regimes, the failure to combat corruption and active criticism against corrupt leaders have not caused the termination of democracy.
Argument on Prebendalism and Volatility of the Politics in Nigeria:

Corruption has persisted in Nigeria despite the rhetoric that denounces such a conduct, because the leaders’ attempts to combat corruption have been either half-hearted or selective. There are structural and consistent factors that have deprived the political leaders of the opportunity to sincerely tackle corruption. Corruption in Nigeria is grounded on its volatile and unstable political surroundings. The political and social landscapes of Nigeria are characterized by the multiplicity of the groups and their struggles to access public resources. Richard Joseph describes corruption in Nigeria as a product of prebendal politics, in which individuals’ connections with the patrons play an important role in their attainment of security and material and social advancements (Joseph, 1987, p. 55). This patrimonial system has pervaded individuals’ lives both in civic and political realms, and its logics have become more important than the legal rules in shaping their behaviour (Joseph, 1987, p. 55). His argument is that corruption in Nigeria is not only driven by the personal greed of the perpetrators, but it is also a systemic issue that rests on and is driven by instability of a society. In the prebendal order, political leaders personalize and monopolize the state and its offices, because they constantly face the threats of their positions being “snatched away” by their opponents (Joseph, 1987, p. 65). De Waal argues that the salience of the political risks and lack of state institutions to contain these risks necessitate the leaders’ reliance on patrimonial networks as a tool of “inclusive buy-in” of the parties and groups willing to agitate the security (De Waal, 2009, p. 112). Like de Waal, Joseph states that the complex, factionalized and unstable politics has driven corruption in Nigeria. This explanation is
useful in understanding how the past regimes failed to sustain democracy in Nigeria and why the current regime has maintained democracy despite the persistence of corruption.

The politics of Nigeria has historically been risky and volatile. This perpetuated the poor performance of the civilian government in the First Republic. Risks and volatilities in politics stem from disproportionate access to the political power between different groups in this country. The political landscape and the power arrangement of the First Republic were created shortly before the independence. The 1951 Constitution set the principles of electoral politics in Nigeria. It also established Nigeria’s federal structure with three regions of the North, the West and the East as the subnational units of government, and each of these regions enjoyed high degree of autonomy (Diamond, 1988, p. 37). This political arrangement placed the three prominent groups, the Northerners, the Igbos in the East and the Yorubas in the West in an uneasy juxtaposition (Diamond, 1988, p. 37). The Northerners were granted the greater political power by the British colonial authority, while the Yorubas and the Igbos had advantages in educational attainment, economic performance and greater affinity to the Western political systems, due to their greater access to the colonial administration and infrastructures, which were concentrated in the south (Diamond, 1988, p. 37). High degree of autonomy of each region in the federation affected the political parties to be formed along the ethnic and regional divisions. The Northern People’s Congress was formed to advocate the interests of the Northerners, while the Action Group and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens represented the interests of the Yorubas and the Igbos respectively (Diamond, 1988, p. 62). This pattern of party formation entrenched the regional divisions and accentuated the ethnic rivalries and political disputes.
Parties became the central organ of patronage networks in the First Republic. Party leaders became the big-men or the political patrons who allocated resources and jobs to their supporters. In the First Republic, there were extensive competitions between the parties, since the major task for the party leaders was to secure a greater share of the public resources at the central government and distribute these resources to their supporters (Diamond, 1988, p. 63). Amidst such circumstances, public offices and the government positions became the objects of personalization and embezzlement. Due to the intensity of competitions, political parties and their members widely used violence to for political purposes. Since the introduction of competitive elections and federalism in 1951, politicians have mobilized the bands of thugs to command political support and intimidate their opponents (Diamond, 1988, p. 38).

While competitions for a greater access to the public resources accelerated ethnic rivalries, it also promoted inter-party coalitions. The initial phase of politics in independent Nigeria was based on the alliance between the Northerners’ NPC and the Igbo’s NCNC. The NPC leader, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa became the Prime Minister and Nnamdi Azikiwe, the leader of the NCNC became the President (Siollun, 2009, p. 13). This trans-ethnic coalition remained fragile and uneasy, as there were constant disputes between them over prominent positions in the government and for a greater share of resources. It also caused intra-ethnic discontent among the Yorubas, who remained outside this alliance. An internecine emerged within the Action Group between the members who sought to collaborate with the ruling party and those who sought to maintain their stance as an opposition (Siollun, 2009, p. 37). The combination of the aforementioned propensity of the politicians for resorting to violence for political
purposes and the dispute over the approach to the ruling party resulted in an outbreak of violent revolts in Western Nigeria in 1964 over the election results and allegations of electoral fraud (Siollun, 2009, p. 37). As a result of this crisis, Obafemi Awolowo, the opposition leader, became detained in an orchestrated attempt by Samuel Akintola, who sought to cooperate with the central government (Siollun, 2009, p. 37). This aroused civic disorder in the southwest, which quickly spread to the other parts of Nigeria. When it grew beyond control, a group of officers toppled the First Republic in 1966 with their promise to combat corruption, restore order and reestablish democracy. This case shows how polarization of the politics in Nigeria particularly in its relation to the access to the resources has founded a risky and volatile political environment.

The government’s inability to contain the violent competitions over the access to the public resources became a major factor for the collapse of the First Republic. People welcomed the establishment of the military regime as a restorative measure to mend the politics corroded by tribalism and corruption. In contrast to the popular expectation, ethnic rivalries had been affecting the structure of the military. Although the military remained largely meritocratic at the time of the coup, the discrepancy in the levels of educational attainment between the Northerners and the other groups, particularly the Igbos, had affected its recruitment pattern. At the time of the independence, Igbos constituted over 60% of the army’s officer corps, because they tended to score highly in the entrance exam (Siollun, 2009, p. 27). Such a disparity was met with the establishment of the regional quota system, which reserved 50% of the positions to the Northerners (Siollun, 2009, p. 28). Quota system also became the basis of the allocation of public resources, employment in civil services and in entrance to the universities (Siollun, 2009,
This system disproportionately benefited the Northerners and it secured a significant portion of the positions in the government, military and civil services for them.

For those who toppled the first republic and for Ironsi, who defeated the coup and became the first military leader, the quota system was the source of corruption and tribal animosities. The leadership of Ironsi and his attempts to combat corruption and tribalism challenged the privilege that had hitherto been enjoyed by the Northerners. The most predominant example of such attempts is the adoption of the Unification Decree No. 34 in May 1966. This abolished the federal structure, prohibited the formation of political parties and their subordinate cultural associations and terminated the regional quota system in employments (Siollun, 2009, p. 76). This attempt was aimed at overcoming tribalism and corruption, which were perceived as “Nigeria’s biggest ills” (Siollun, 2009, p. 76). The decree disproportionately affected the Northerners, since they were more reliant on such protective systems than other groups. Nigeria’s civil service, which had previously been based on the regions, became unified and its employment became based solely on the skills and qualification of the applicants (Siollun, 2009, p. 76). This was a removal “an in-built protection for Northerners”, and it would expose them to gross competitions with the other groups particularly the Igbos, who were viewed by the Northerners as “energetic and pushy” (Siollun, 2009, pp. 76-77). These attempts inspired the fears of the Northerners toward the Igbos. The fact that Ironsi himself was an Igbo also assisted the development of such sentiments. It is the fear and unpopularity of the Unification Decree that induced another coup, plotted and conducted by the Northerners. The plotters of this coup assassinated Ironsi and placed Yakubu Gowon, who was neither
a Northerner nor involved in the assassination, as the new military leader who would represent the interests of the Northerners.

Ironsi’s attempts to combat corruption and tribalism agitated the risky and volatile politics of Nigeria and induced another coup that took his own life. It also sparked violence at the civic level. The perceived economic and political domination by the Igbos and the removal of the systems that would secure the interests of the Northerners resulted in the widespread attacks on the Igbo communities and systematic killings of the Igbo residents in the Northern cities (Falola, 1999, p. 118). The removal of the Igbos from the leading positions in the government left the room for the Yorubas to seize these positions: there was a formation of alliance between the Northerners and the Yorubas and it accelerated the alienation of the Igbos (Falola, 1999, p. 119). These events accelerated antagonisms between the Igbos and the rest of Nigeria and triggered the outbreak of the Biafran War.

For the Northerners, regional divisions and the quota systems were a necessary instrument to address their disadvantages in their struggles to secure access to the state resources. On the other hand, those who were excluded from the benefits of such systems viewed them as a source of corruption and tribalism. This confirms the argument made by Olivier de Sardan (1999) that critique of corruption comes from those who are alienated from its benefit. What are not addressed in detail in his argument are 1) how such rhetoric is politicized and utilized for violent purposes and 2) how the individuals who receive the benefit of corruption may react to such rhetoric violently, and 3) how it may trigger a conflict that is great enough to challenge the territorial integrity of a country. In the aforementioned case, there was a dialogue between the individuals who
were alienated by the system that produced corruption and those with the vested interests in maintaining such a system. It is not clear whether Ironsi’s attempts to challenge the systems that safeguarded the Northerners’ share in employment and allocation of resources were driven by the tribal interests of the Igbos. However, it is apparent that he publicly used the rhetoric of combating corruption and tribalism, and the Igbos had been excluded from the benefit of the system he was challenging. Northerners reacted to Ironsi’s attempts with the propagation of a counter-discourse centred on the notion of Igbo conspiracy, which holds that the Igbos were planning to monopolize the state’s resources (Siollun, 2009, p. 97).

The history of Nigeria has shown that whenever a new regime becomes established, it produces new vested interests that produce corruption. Despite the changes in interests, the use of rhetoric against corruption has persisted in a changing political environment. In the case of Mohammed’s coup against Gowon in 1975, there are palpable aspects of how the rhetoric that denounces corruption was used as the tool to overthrow his regime. Gowon’s rise to power and the oil boom have redrawn the nature of ethno-politics within the military. Although Gowon was placed as the political leader to represent the interests of the Northerners, he was a Christian minority from the region called the Middle Belt. Following the advent of the oil boom, there was a feud between those who supported Gowon and those who opposed to him (Siollun, 2009, p. 176). The former, the “pro-Gowon camp”, which mainly consisted of the soldiers from Gowon’s home region, monopolized the benefits of oil boom, while the latter were predominantly Muslim officers from the far north, who were disaffected by this monopoly (Siollun, 2009, p. 176). Accusation against corruption in the Gowon regime came from the latter.
Mohammed, the leader of the anti-Gowon camp, began criticizing Gowon and his associates for engaging in corrupt activities. It should also be noted that although the Northerners constituted the majority, the anti-Gowon camp also included the non-Northerners (Siollun, 2009, p. 175). It is the alienation from the benefit of corruption that brought these officers together to topple the Gowon regime.

As soon as he removed Gowon from his office and assumed the power, Mohammed launched an anti-corruption campaign. In this campaign, close associates of Gowon became deprived of the chances for promotion due to their engagement in embezzlement of public resources and neglect of ethics. They were “subjectively dispossessed” by Mohammed, who patronized those who were loyal to him (Siollun, 2009, p. 192). While Mohammed showed an uncompromising stance in removing these officers on the charges of corruption, he coped with corruption among the civil servants with lenient sanctions. In his anti-corruption campaign, more than 11,000 public servants throughout the federation were forced to retire (Joseph, 1987, p. 87). However, they became repatriated to their offices at the speed that “amaze[d] most foreign observers” (Joseph, 1987, p. 87). Therefore, Mohammed’s anti-corruption campaign was a purge against his political opponents, rather than a genuine attempt to reduce corruption and punish those engaged in such a conduct. The coup of 1976, which involved the assassination of Mohammed, was largely a retaliatory attempt by the close associates of Gowon, who sought to regain their hegemony in the government (Siollun, 2009, pp. 193-194). Their ultimate goal was not accomplished, since Obasanjo counteracted and defeated this attempt.

The collapse of the Second Republic illuminates how the enormity of the benefits of monopolization of the state apparatus and zero-sum nature of the electoral processes
accelerated corruption. It also shows how the incumbent leaders’ attempts to maintain the monopoly and the oppositions’ resistance to the status quo resulted in a violent conflict. There was a great premium on state power, and the persistence of tribal cleavages in politics has accelerated violent competitions over the access to such power. It was attempted to address the issue of tribalism with the creation of more regions and the new constitution to make the political parties more inclusive. The number of regions became increased from twelve to nineteen to undermine the ethnic and regional solidarities (Diamond, 1988, p. 47). The new constitution prohibited the formation of sectional parties and made it mandatory for the political parties to have “broad ethnic representation” (Diamond, 1988, p. 47). Parties were now required to present “visible evidence of crosscutting support” to be validated to run for the elections (Diamond, 1988, p. 65). Despite these attempts, ethnic cleavage did not dissipate completely.

Hasty process of party formation is one of the causes of the failure of removing tribalism in the Second Republic. Politicians only had three months to form their parties. It prevented adequate cross-regional and interethnic concessions in party formation (Diamond, 1988, p. 67). As a result, the three major parties\(^\text{20}\) organized for the 1979 election had a “strong semblance” to the ethnic parties in the First Republic: the National Party of Nigeria (NNP) was supported primarily by the peoples in the former North, while the Unity Party of Nigeria (UNP) and the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) represented mainly the Yorubas and the Igbos respectively (Diamond, 1988, p. 48).

Although each of these parties had broader membership than their counterparts in the

\(^{20}\) In addition to the three major parties, there were two smaller parties: PRP (Peoples Redemption Party) which upheld progressive agenda and supported by a sizable portion of Northerners and GNPP (Great Nigerian Peoples Party), headed by Waziri Ibrahim who had split from Azikiwe over the NPP leadership (Diamond, 1988, 48).
First Republic, the members of each party “tended to retreat into convenient and familiar ethnic alignments” (Diamond, 1988, p. 48-49). As a result, ethno-centrism persisted and the voting patterns of the citizens robustly reflected their ethnic interests (Diamond, 1988, p. 49). Inadequacy in concessions and integration of diverse regional interests in party formation have resulted in the persistence of tribalism and regional animosities in the Second Republic.

The election in 1979 resulted in the NPN victory\(^\text{21}\). However, NPN failed to secure an absolute majority of the votes in the federal level (Joseph, 1987, p. 164). The uncertainty in the prospects for the NPN’s success in maintaining its position as the ruling party resulted in the monopoly of the state machinery to ensure its victory in the following election (Joseph, 1987, p. 167). The Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) was established as an independent commission to monitor electoral process and implement rules and regulations to prevent electoral misconduct (Joseph, 1987, p. 154). By 1983, this commission became an instrument of the NPN to maintain its position as the ruling party (Joseph, 1987, p.167). Similarly, other law-enforcement bodies such as police and the judiciary also became “partisan instruments of the ruling party” (Diamond, 1988, p. 66). Monopoly of the state machineries became an integral aspect of gaining and maintaining power. Coupled with the perceived and real insecurity, this high premium of power made the electoral processes a zero-sum game, making the parties and their candidates desperate to win. As they became desperate, they were increasingly prone to use illicit means to mobilize votes (Diamond, 1988, p. 67). For the NPN and its leaders, such corrupt practices were the acts of securing their positions, the loss of which would

\(^{21}\) NPN won one-third of seats at the legislature, seven of nineteen gubernatorial offices, and considerable share of the seats at the state legislatures (Joseph, 1987, 164).
accompany the loss of all the privileges. For the opposition candidates, these acts were their desperate attempts to access the state resources to advance their material interests and meet the expectations from their supporters. Prevalence of corruption breached the rule of law and it put the party politics and civil society in the “Hobbesian state-of-war” (Joseph, 1987, p. 154). Democratic processes of party politics became subverted by corruption.

Again, condemnations of corrupt practices came from the opposition leaders and their supporters, who were excluded from the benefits of such activities. For instance, Chief Bisi Akande, one of the leading figures in the opposition Unity Party of Nigeria and a candidate for the deputy governor of Oyo State in western Nigeria, declared that his party was defeated in the 1983 election due to electoral fraud, and he called for the judicial intervention and “the people’s judgment” (Joseph, 1987, p. 174). Opposition leaders’ calls for repealing of the election results also provoked popular revolts instigated by the vigilante groups subordinate to the party. These involved the assault on suspected supporters of the ruling party and burnings of properties of any organization with suspected affiliations with the NPN (Joseph, 1987, p. 174). As in the event that led to the collapse of the First Republic, western Nigeria once again became the epicenter of the event that toppled the democratic regime. This geographic coincidence of the region, from which violent turmoil spread throughout Nigeria, rendered this region as “wild west” (Joseph, 1987, p. 175). The spread of violent protests against the election results gave a room for another coup that established a new military regime.

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22 Joseph provides the remark made by Ahmadu Kurti, Executive Secretary of the Federal Electoral Commission that there were numerous occasions in 1979 election in which surplus ballots were traded for money, ballot boxes were pre-filled and many ballots were invalidated by counting officials (Joseph, 1987, 155).
Corruption as an Art of Stealing:

Politics of Nigeria is deeply divided and segmented. It consists of interactions and competitions between various groups and factions over the access to public resources. Each group exploit patronage networks as a conduit through which the resources are allocated from the elites to their supporters. The point that needs to be clear is that a patronage system that is viewed by a particular group as corrupt is in fact perceived by another group as a safety net to protect their interests or even as an essential tool for their survival. An attempt to challenge such a system with a gross neglect of its benevolent aspect agitates the politics, which is both risky and volatile. Such an attempt results in outbreak of a great violence. This point is consolidated by how Ironsi’s attempts to combat corruption and overcome tribalism induced a violent repercussion.

It is the mismanagement of corruption that led to the failure of the past attempts to sustain democracy. A multitude of group and segmental competitions over the access to the central resources is an integral aspect of the politics of Nigeria. This feature has existed since its independence to this day. However, the nature of this competition has shifted throughout the history. There is a critical difference between the current democratic regime and its predecessors in terms of the scope of inclusion of the patronage networks. Like the previous democratic regimes, parties have been the vehicles of political competitions and the monopoly over the state resources is enjoyed almost exclusively by the ruling party. Unlike the previous regimes, party memberships in the Fourth Republic have become more inclusive and flexible. This has allowed a wider distribution of the benefit of corruption. The following part of this paper argues that this
shift in the character of corruption, and the widening of the scope of inclusion in the benefits of corruption are the most critical factor that enabled the leaders to sustain democracy.

**Strategy of Manufacturing Consent for the PDP: Obasanjo’s Manipulation of Budgeting Process**

Joseph argues that the consociational democracy is crucial in minimizing the political risks in a highly segmented and factionalized society such as Nigeria. The concept of consociational democracy is based on the perception that conflicts and rivalries stemming from the heterogeneity of a society cannot be overcome through the purely majoritarian politics, which is the most conventional interpretation of democratic rule (Joseph, 1987, p. 25). Joseph introduces Nordlinger’s proposition of accommodating “non-majoritarian” elements in governance as a necessary step in achieving a consociational democracy, which guarantees a certain share of the power to minorities or those who have lost the competitions (Joseph, 1987, p. 26). This involves the reduction of the strength of central government and entrenchment of fiscal federalism (Joseph, 1987, p. 26). Joseph argues that the repeated failure in Nigeria to sustain democracy is due largely to the failure of attaining the consociational features in politics. This made the political contests zero-sum struggles, encouraged leaders to monopolize the state resources and marginalized the other groups from the access to the resources. In the First Republic, party politics and political competitions were primarily based on the regional and ethnic cleavages. This encouraged the leaders to engage in “deliberate mobilization of ethnic suspicion, fear, jealousy, and hostility” in their struggles to prevail in the competitions (Diamond, 1988, p. 62). This caused severe social unrest and territorial
disintegration, which culminated in the outbreak of the civil war. In the Second Republic, it was attempted to address this trend by establishing the constitutional basis for broader regional representations of the parties. Again, this did not succeed largely due to an inadequacy in time for preparation for the creation of more inclusive parties (Diamond, 1988, p. 67). With the establishment of the Fourth Republic, Obasanjo counteracted the risks and volatilities by expanding the patronage networks by absorbing a significant number of his opponents into his party, rather than marginalizing them. This marks a drastic shift in the nature of corruption and the pattern of use of patrimonial network. A case of political interactions between the central government and the governments in the Yoruba-speaking regions is the most remarkable example that highlights Obasanjo’s success in reduction of political risk. It also highlights a critical role that patronage networks play in the reduction of volatility in political processes.

As stated above, the Yoruba-speaking regions in western Nigeria had been known for their uncompromising stance toward the central government, and these areas became the epicentre of the events that led to the collapse of the previous democratic regimes. Split within the Action Group and accusation of the election rigging induced violent revolts that resulted in the collapse of the First Republic. In the Second Republic, the Unity Party of Nigeria was “stymied in its ability to work cooperatively with the other opposition parties” due to its rivalries against them and Awolowo’s personal ambition for the presidency (Joseph, 1987, p. 167). Participants of the protests expressed condemnations of corruption, vote rigging and tribalism. Such rhetoric was mainly driven by the disaffection and grievances felt by the Yorubas in the system that excluded them from the benefits of corruption. The establishment of the Fourth Republic by Obasanjo
was followed by a termination of such tendencies. Pacification of the former Western region, the Yoruba-speaking states is one important aspect of the persistence of democracy.

The inclusion of these regions in the patronage network to the central state for the distribution of resources is the most critical factor for this transformation. In the previous regimes, the patrimonial network in the Yoruba-speaking regions had existed independently of the central government. Obafemi Awolowo, a prominent Yoruba political leader and the founder of the Action Group, developed the network that functioned solely on a regional scale (Hoffmann & Nolte, 2013, p. 27). He promoted communal politics and hosted development programs by utilizing the reciprocal networks, through which he mobilized and redistributed resources to his supporters (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 28). Awolowo’s success in promoting regional politics and development instigated the communal politics against the central government (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 29). The creation of grassroots organization and a formal political party are the pivotal elements in the Yoruba politics. The Oodua People’s Congress (OPC) was established by Awolowo originally as a socio-cultural organization dedicated to the “discussion of Yoruba culture, history and current affairs”, and it later became involved in political activities such as the settlement of local disputes and vigilantism (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 31). The OPC mobilized popular support to the political party and its party leader. It provided an organizational basis for the grassroots politics in the Yoruba-speaking regions and it “entrenched nature of Yoruba grievances vis-à-vis the central government” (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 31). The OPC played a significant role in
instigating the post-electoral disputes of 1964 and 1983, which triggered the events that toppled the First and the Second republics.

The ban on the formation of the political parties was lifted in 1999. The election held in the same year brought the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) led by Olusegun Obasanjo to power. Although the PDP won at the federal level, it did not succeed in the Yoruba areas. A majority of the Yoruba votes went to the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and its candidates. Despite that he was a Yoruba, Obasanjo failed to attract votes in his home regions, since the majority of the Yorubas viewed him as a close associate of the Northerners due to his previous career in assisting the Northern leaders during the military regimes (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 31). Facing the defeat in the western Nigeria, Obasanjo and the PDP sought to extend their support base in these regions. They did so by challenging the solidarity of the members of the opposition and recruiting prominent individuals to act as “a conduit for federal funds in support of the PDP” (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 35).

Obasanjo deprived the regions ruled by the AD of the resources necessary for their leaders to earn legitimacy. He exploited his position as the head of the central government and its role as the dispenser of the funds and resources for regional development. During the electoral campaign, the AD had promised to provide greater amount of resources than the PDP. After 1999 election, Obasanjo controlled and withheld the revenue allocation to the States with AD governors (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 32). This caused the loss of popular confidence of the opposition governors and their associates (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 32). The PDP created and utilized the fiscal dependency to expand its support base in the West. Obasanjo also orchestrated illicit
electoral practices such as intimidation and threatening of the voters, manipulation of registration processes and deliberate misallocations of ballot boxes (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 33). These methods of alienation of the opponents in allocation of resources and electoral frauds were also employed in the First and the Second Republic. However, what sets the Fourth Republic apart from the previous regimes is the skills with which Obasanjo established the new patronage network with the local leaders and how he used this as a link to the locally based patronage networks. This bridged the ruling party and the regional politics of the Yoruba states, and prevented the surge of violent revolts against the central government.

Fiscal marginalization factionalized the AD members between the group that advocated cooperation to the central government and those who opposed to it. Gani Adams, the leader of OPC, a grassroots organization that had channeled political support to the AD, chose to support Obasanjo and his party, because he considered remaining in opposition would no longer serve the “Yoruba interest” (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 32). Hoffman and Nolte note that the greater material benefits promised to Adams by Obasanjo underlie this shift. This affected many OPC members and politicians to convert their support to the ruling party (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 32). By bringing prominent members of the OPC to his side, Obasanjo expanded his power base in Yoruba-speaking regions. Hoffman and Nolte also note the impact of the generational change on the shift in political stance of the OPC members: those who embraced Awolowo’s opposition tactics toward the central government were no longer in the leading positions of the OPC (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 32). This inter-generational gap in approach to the central
government also contributed to the ease with which the new leaders of this organization pledged their support to the PDP.

Obasanjo’s recruitment of local politicians enabled him to access and utilize the regional patronage networks that connected the regional elites and their supporters. This bridged the gap between the central government and the Yoruba communities. Lamidi Adedibu is one of the most prominent figures that facilitated this process. During the Second Republic, he had proven his capabilities to collaborate with the central government as a “conduit for federal funds” in sponsoring suitable candidates in elections (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 35). After 1999 election, Obasanjo handpicked Adedibu to play the same role for his party (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 35). Adedibu had hosted the patronage networks linking the regional labour unions and self-help groups of various occupations. Obasanjo’s access to these networks was crucial in the PDP victory in the 2003 election (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, pp. 35-36). In this election, Obasanjo actualized the PDP victory in Oyo State with active support of Adedibu, overturning the AD dominance in this region (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 36). This shifted the local support base to the PDP.

Obasanjo also recruited his opponents to his party. Gbenga Daniel is a prominent opposition member who contributed to the AD victory in Ogun State in 1999. During his campaign, he utilized his patrimonial links to mobilize support. He made investments in the Gateway Front Foundation (GFF), a community development organization, which offered citizens various forms of assistance (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 37). Daniel’s

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23 “Daniel demonstrated his own awareness of the needs and concerns of Ogun State citizens through the GFF’s free deworming exercises for children and medical screening for the elderly, its interest-free micro credit scheme and other employment assistance programs” (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, 38).
strategy in election was a combination of charity and political rallies, and he offered
reciprocity to his supporters (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, 38). Obasanjo lured Daniel to join
his party by promising him of both material benefits and political promotions and
manipulating his rivalries with the governor. With his own skills at utilizing patronage
links to command popular support and Obasanjo’s active assistance, Daniel succeeded in
defeating the AD candidate in 2003 gubernatorial election and became elected as the
Ogun State Governor (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 38). This shows how careful and
skillful engineering of patronage and corruption truncated the strength of the opposition.
An effective utilization of patronage has reduced the chances of violent event that would
lead to the collapse of the regime.

The only Yoruba region that succeeded in withstanding the force from the central
party in 2003 was Lagos State. In both 2003 and 2007 elections, Bola Tinubu maintained
his position as an opposition governor of this region (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 40).
Hoffman and Nolte attribute this to the two factors. First, Lagos is the largest and the
most prosperous city in Nigeria. Sufficiency in the resource base allowed the governor to
raise funds without relying on the assistance from the central government (Hoffman &
Nolte, 2013, p. 40). Secondly, impenetrability of the patronage network that Tinubu had
developed linking him and private businesses based in Lagos prevented Obsanjo to
extend his influence to Lagos State. Tinubu had developed patronage links to the
grassroots and demonstrated his capability to collect local tax, and in return he secured
the business interests of the private companies and entrepreneurs in this region (Hoffman
& Nolte, 2013, p. 40). Those who enjoyed preferential access to contracts, business
opportunities and various other benefits by Tinubu did not choose to support the central
government and the PDP (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 40). This shows how the fiscal independence of Lagos enabled its politician to resist the prebendal forces from the central government, and how the lack thereof in other Yoruba-speaking regions has promoted their inclusion in the patrimonial networks on the grand scale.

Tinubu also emulated Obasanjo’s tactics in the following elections. This became the major factor for the PDP defeat in most Yoruba-speaking regions in 2011 election. In reaction to the PDP victories in 2003, Tinubu attempted to extend his influence to the other regions vis-à-vis the central government. His party recruited the former vice president Atiku Abubakar, who was deposed by Obasanjo in 2007 (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 41). Like Obasanjo, he utilized the patrimonial distribution of resources to win cooperation of prominent individuals both from the ruling parties and oppositions to challenge the PDP influence in other Yoruba speaking regions. In 2011, Tinubu’s party achieved gubernatorial victories in Oyo, Ogun, and Lagos States (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 41). These opposition victories were also assisted by the reduction of the allocation of resources from the central government to these regions from 2003. After Obasanjo consolidated his patrimonial influence in most states in Yoruba-speaking region, there was a reduction in the amount of funds allocated to these areas from the central government (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 44). This accelerated the defection of the local allies of the PDP to Tinubu’s opposition party, which continued to dispense resources to attract support in these areas. It also made the PDP “increasingly vulnerable” to criticism from those who were disaffected by the decline in the allocation of funds, and allowed the increase in the influence of the opposition at the grassroots level (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 44). Obasanjo’s success in achieving victory in 2003 election in Yoruba-
speaking states and the subsequent failure in maintaining his party’s stronghold in 2011 is an exemplary case of the importance of maintaining patronage system by continuously investing and dispensing resources in order to secure their positions.

Chabal and Daloz describe the party politics in Africa as “instrumentalization of disorder”. They apply this term to illustrate its particularity in comparison to the conventional understandings of the politics in the West. They argue that in the West political contests and disputes are based on and structured by political ideologies and party disciplines, and the parties function as impersonal bodies that represent political ideologies and implement social programs (Chabal & Daloz, 2009, p. 154). In contrast, electoral politics in Africa is primarily driven by the leaders’ needs to secure their respectable social status in their communities (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, p. 159). In this process, political parties are merely the “extensions of individual politicians”, and they are exploited to satisfy the politicians’ goals (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, p. 151). Relative ease at which Gbenga Daniel decamped from the opposition AD to the ruling PDP conforms to this argument. Chabal and Daloz also argue that corruption in Africa is not simply an abuse of power. Although such conduct is driven by the self-interests of the perpetrators and it necessarily involves the neglect of formal rules and regulations, it is ultimately dictated by greater needs and social expectations. The analysis of the aforementioned case shows that maintaining territorial integrity is another significant aspect of corruption. Obasanjo’s effective management of personalized power and state resources to win the cooperation of prominent local politicians was the key in the PDP victory in 2003 election. By curtailing the strength of the opposition in these regions, he downsized the extent of post-electoral violence, which in previous regimes had evolved
into a scale great enough to topple the regime. From this fact, it is shown that the leaders’ abuse of power has been an effective tool in maintaining the territorial integrity and sustaining democracy. It also shows how the reduction of patrimonial allocation of resources caused disaffection of the supporters, leading to the opposition victory in the majority of the states in Yoruba-speaking regions in 2011. Despite this reversal of power relations between the incumbent and opposition parties in these regions, the presence of the opposition party as an alternative channel of patronage, capable of mobilizing and dispensing resources, prevented the aggravation of the post-electoral violence. Therefore, multiplication of the patrimonial channels of resource distributions has greatly pacified the area that had previously been known as the epicentre of the collapse of democratic regimes.

**Democracy that works in Nigeria:**

Joseph (1987) views consociational democracy as a viable form of governance in Nigeria. He argues that it is the system that best avoids the “winner takes all” political contests, which easily collapse into violent conflicts. Consociational democracy allows certain share of the public resources to be granted to the parties or groups that have lost the elections. The multitude of groups and highly segmented nature of the politics in Nigeria has made it difficult to actualize such a system. The central government continues to hold a strong influence over the resource allocation and electoral contests remain to be fierce competitions over power and resources. However, the nature of corruption has been transformed in a manner that allows a certain portion of the benefit to be allocated more evenly and flexibly. Unlike the previous democratic regimes, party
formation in the current Fourth Republic is no longer based on ethnic cleavages. Each party is becoming increasingly inclusive of different ethnicities and regional membership. As shown by how Obasanjo extended his patronage networks into the Yoruba-speaking regions, there have been more concessions and power brokering since the re-establishment of democracy in 1999.

As Chabal and Daloz argue, corruption cannot be simply understood as stealing of funds or abuse of power. It also has an aspect of distributing the share of the resources embezzled by the perpetrators to their followers. Sensitivity to this point is critical for the leaders to maintain their legitimacy and secure their respectable status in their communities (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, p. 159). In addition to this aspect, it is identified that corruption has provided an expedient tool for the leaders to maintain the territorial integrity of a country. Collapse of the First and the Second Republic are the exemplary cases where the neglect of the importance of widening the scope of reallocation of the benefit of monopoly resulted in the failure to sustain democratic rule. In previous regimes, both democratic and military rules, memberships of the group who controlled the state resources were largely based on the ethnic or regional ties, and its benefits were enjoyed exclusively by the members of the group. This antagonized a significant portion of the political elites and their supporters, who were capable of overthrowing the regimes. In today’s democratic system, state offices and public resources continue to be monopolized by the leaders and a prevailing faction in his party. However, Obasanjo has demonstrated his capability to allow a certain portion of the public resources to be spent to win the allegiance of a number of opponents, thereby truncating the support base for
the opposition parties. Therefore, corruption and patronage systems in the Fourth Republic have functioned in a manner that has held the federation together.

Given the central role that patronage plays in maintaining the territorial integrity, Obasanjo’s commitment to combat corruption may appear contradictory to his attempts to fulfill this grand task, since an attempt to tackle corruption may challenge the basis of patronage system. In the previous regimes, the value of combating corruption was introduced half-heartedly and its logic became manipulated by the political leaders as an instrument to remove their rivals from their offices. This point leads to an assumption that the current regime is utilizing anti-corruption campaign for similar purposes. However, as shown by the case of how Murtala Mohammed’s purge of his political opponents in his anti-corruption campaign caused a retaliatory coup that took his own life, such a practice requires particular skills and sensitivity in order to avert a violent backlash. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the manner in which the leaders have approached the issue of corruption in the Fourth Republic and identify particular patterns in the their use of the rhetoric of combating corruption.

**Combating Corruption in the Fourth Republic: From ICPC to EFCC**

First, it is essential to analyze the factors that motivated Obasanjo to publicly proclaim his commitment to combat corruption. Unlike his predecessors, Obasanjo’s anti-corruption campaign was largely his response to the external pressures. The national image of Nigeria had been greatly impaired during Babangida-Abacha years in which corruption was rampant, and autocratic and opportunistic governance made this country an unattractive place to operate businesses. At the 1989 Summit, G7 Countries
established the Financial Action Task Force to tackle money laundering on the international scale, and it labeled Nigeria as “non-cooperative” in its campaign to combat this issue (Obuah, 2010, p. 25). Rampant corruption in Nigeria had also aggravated its economic adversities. Therefore, Obasanjo faced the need to reinvigorate its economy by attracting foreign investment. For this purpose, rehabilitation of Nigeria’s national image was essential. In 2000, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offence Commission (ICPC) was established to combat corruption and promote the enforcement of the code of conduct for public officials (Human Rights Watch, 2011). However, this agency was ineffective in reducing corruption, and the international community and donor agencies continued to place pressure upon the Nigerian government to address this “corruption quagmire” (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 8). In addition, there was a heightened awareness worldwide of the role of corruption in financing terrorism as the international community led by the US launched the post-9/11 counter-terrorist campaigns (Obuah, 2010, p. 25). Facing such pressures, Obasanjo implemented his anti-corruption campaign “in order to redeem Nigeria’s image” (Obuah, 2010, p. 25). In 2002, he created the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) as a new anti-corruption agency, proclaiming the mission to secure foreign investment and “imbue the spirit of hard work” (Obuah, 2010, p. 24). Obasanjo’s anti-corruption campaign and the creation of the EFCC were driven largely by the external pressures.

The establishment of the EFCC is viewed as the centrepiece of Obasanjo’s campaign to combat corruption. Obuah states that the establishment of the EFCC was a

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24 It is stated by the EFCC that this “blacklisting of Nigeria” in the worldwide effort to combat money laundering spurred the newly established democratic government to initiate a program to combat corruption (For more detail, see the EFCC website https://effccnigeria.org).
“remarkable shift” from previous attempts to challenge corruption. He explains that the anticorruption campaigns launched in the preceding regimes suffered from the absence of the legal structures, which would validate and sustain the activities of the anti-corruption agency (Obuah, 2010, p. 24). Unlike the previous regimes, the activities of the EFCC are warranted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Establishment act, which was enacted in 2002 (Obuah, 2010, p. 24). Tayo Oke states that the EFCC and its supporting legal frameworks were prescribed and “pushed” on Nigerian leaders by international financial institutions and donor agencies of the West (Oke, 2014, p. 56). The EFCC defines corruption as financial crimes or any illegal acquisition of wealth and the act of using such wealth to “commit or attempt to commit, facilitate, or participate” in terrorist activities (Obuah, 2010, p. 24). This broad definition of corruption has enabled the EFCC to tackle both big-time and petty corruption. The EFCC aims to prevent, investigate, prosecute and penalize these acts and enforce the provisions of laws and regulations. Activities to achieve these aims are to detect corruption, remove its perpetrators from their offices and punish them and to confiscate the wealth acquired through illegal activities (Obuah, 2010, p. 26). The EFCC and its staff receive information of cases from the citizens through petitions and they are enabled to investigate, arrest, prosecute the corrupt individuals, and return the money to the victims or to the public coffers (Obuah, 2010, p. 26). This agency is intended to be an independent agency with the executive chairman as the head, and he is supported by the directors of five operative units: 1) financial crimes and intelligence; 2) advance-fee fraud and other economic crimes, enforcement, and general operations; 3) prosecution and

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25 Further details are provided in the EFCC website: (https://effcnigeria.org)
legal counsel; 4) organization and support; 5) training school. The EFCC also receives support from the other branches of the government, presidency, judiciary and legislature, and it cooperates with its counterparts outside Nigeria (Obuah, 2010, p. 25). The EFCC appears to represent a comprehensive, organized and sustained effort to tackle corruption of the Fourth Republic.

Nuhu Ribadu became the first chairman of the EFCC. Under Ribadu, the EFCC has achieved a sizable progress in investigating and prosecuting both politicians and private individuals involved in corruption. By 2006, the EFCC received more than 4,200 petitions on corruption cases, conducted investigations of 1,200 cases, and it has prosecuted individuals involved in 406 cases (Obuah, 2010, p. 27). Ribadu also prosecuted politicians holding prominent positions, who were “at the core of corrupt patronage system”, and by 2006, 33 out of 36 state governors in Nigeria became under investigation for corruption cases (The Economist, 2006). EFCC under Ribadu succeeded in arresting six individuals who held prominent positions in the government, all of whom had either been impeached or retired from positions (Obuah, 2010, pp. 26-27). In its early stages, the EFCC achieved a certain degree of success in repatriating the financial resources embezzled by the corrupt individuals. According to Agbibo (2012), under Ribadu, the EFCC recovered more than $5 billion (Agbibo, 2012, p. 118). These achievements at the initial stages and Ribadu’s commitment in tackling corruption have been met with admiration both domestically and from the foreign media.

**Performance of the EFCC in Arresting and Prosecuting Political Elites:**
Arrest and prosecution of Diepreye Solomon Peter Alamieyeseigha, a former governor of the oil-rich Bayelsa State in southern Nigeria, is the most prominent and symbolic achievement of the EFCC under Ribadu. During the time he served as a state governor, Alamieyeseigha captured the state funds and illegally accumulated money in foreign assets and bank accounts (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 118). Alamieyeseigha was first arrested in London, where he stayed after he had a plastic surgery in Germany (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 137). He was found to be in possession of multiple properties in London, Cape Town and held bank accounts in Cyprus, Denmark, the United States and Nigeria, whose total value exceeded $254 million (Agbiboa, 2012, p. 118). He was tried in the UK for money laundering, but escaped to Nigeria to his duty when he was granted a bail during his trial (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 141). Despite being arrested abroad, he was assured of the security of his position in his home country. This was validated by the so-called “immunity clause” in Section 308 of 1999 Constitution, which prohibits detention and criminal trial of those who occupy executive positions such as state governors during his or her tenure (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 122). To counteract such a challenge, the EFCC under Ribadu facilitated the impeachment of the governor to divest him of his immunity. The State Assembly of Bayelsa, a legislative branch at the state level, was the only body empowered to impeach the governor (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 144). The EFCC and the president urged the Assembly to impeach the governor for his criminal charges, and on November 24 2005, Alamieyeseigha was impeached losing his immunity from detention and prosecution. He was arrested in the following days and prosecuted for money laundering.
The manner in which Alamieyeseigha was impeached is controversial. The EFCC curbed Alamieyeseigha’s influence in the State Assembly by removing the members loyal to him (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 125). Then, the EFCC urged the State Assembly to initiate the motion for the impeachment of the governor on the ground of his corruption charges (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 125). Inokoba and Ibegu argue that the EFCC with the support of Obasanjo exerted “lawless measures” to facilitate this process. They argue that the process involved blackmailing of the Assembly members and suspension of the state account upon their initial refusal to comply (Inokoba & Ibegu, 2011, p. 289). Adebanwi does not argue that illicit force was involved in the process of impeachment. However, he explains that the fact that the Assembly members themselves were involved in the embezzlement of public funds made them potential targets of investigation, and it necessitated a “secret bargain” between them and the EFCC (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 144). He argues that the members of the State Assembly were deprived of all options except for initiating the impeachment of the governor. By November 24, 2005, a majority (19 out of 24) of the members signed the impeachment notice (Adebanwi, 2012, pp. 144-145).

Critics of the EFCC and the president criticized their use of coercive measures and argued that the case of Alamieyeseigha should have been handled through legal measures.

Agbiba explains that corruption is often justified by its perpetrators’ expression of their loyalty to their ethnic groups and such an act is celebrated by those who receive its benefit (Agbiba, 2012, p. 120). Alamieyeseigha expressed his loyalty to the Ijaw people residing in his home region and employed the discourse of regional resource control to justify his corrupt practices. Such rhetoric was effective particularly with the role it plays
in constructing a convenient narrative of the people's agony over poverty amidst the abundance of oil resources. Alamieyeseigha attributed the widespread poverty in Bayelsa to the insufficiency of the amount of funds allocated to this region (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 146). He asserted that although oil resources have yielded financial profits, such profit was captured and monopolized by the central government. Alamieyeseigha proclaimed to his people of his mission to combat this unjust reality and expand the regional share of the profit derived from this resources (Adebanwi, 2012, p.146). By doing so, Alamieyeseigha diverted people’s attention from his monopoly over the public resources to the perceived injustice that the majority of such resources are controlled by the central government.

Alamieyeseigha and his supporters also employed the logic of resource control to frame his detention and prosecution as an act of marginalization of the Ijaw people. Chief Edwin Clark, a former federal information minister and a close associate of Alamieyeseigha, asserted that the arrest of Alamieyeseigha in London was a systematic attempt by the central government of Nigeria in collaboration with a foreign government to ostracize the leader loyal to the interests of his ethnic group (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 146). Alamieyeseigha before his arrest in Nigeria made television and radio broadcast claiming that he was being arrested for his “advocacy for resource control” (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 146). Such a tactic was effective in attaining sympathy from his people. For instance, Inokoba and Ibegu argue that Alamieyeseigha was victimized by the EFCC and the president because of his “staunch advocacy” of a greater regional control over petroleum resources (Inokoba & Ibegu, 2011, p. 289). Adebanwi challenges this perspective. He points out that there has been an increase in the portion of the oil revenues allocated to
the oil producing regions including Bayelsa\textsuperscript{26}. Despite an increase in allocation, the majority of the Ijaws continue to suffer from various forms of deprivations (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 136). Adebanwi’s argument is that the expression of loyalty to his ethnicity was merely a rhetorical tool to conceal the fact that the major portion of the resources allocated to Bayelsa were in fact captured by Alamieyeseigha and kept aside from development purposes (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 146). While he enjoyed monopoly over the funds, Alamieyeseigha blamed the poverty of the mass on the central government. This projected the image of Alamieyeseigha as a patriotic leader who masterminded a greater regional control over resources.

\textbf{When Corruption Fights Back: Militants and Corruption:}

Arrest and prosecution of Alamieyeseigha had a significant impact on the regional patronage network that he had created. It also agitated the risky and volatile socio-political environment of oil-rich Niger Delta. After the death of Abacha, there was a growth in militant youth movements and clandestine organizations, which engage in illicit extraction of oil, destruction of oil production facilities and various forms of violence including kidnapping and assault on the security forces (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 136). The Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) are the most prominent examples. The logic of deprivation and ethnic marginalization, the rhetoric exploited by the regional politicians to justify corruption, has also been utilized by the militant youths to justify their illicit activities (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 136). Elias Curson explains that widespread poverty, youth

\textsuperscript{26}Derivation formula allows thirteen per cent of revenue derived from oil to be reimbursed to the oil-producing regions (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 136).
unemployment and devastation of the local environment on which they depend for their livelihood, are the greatest factors that accelerated the militant activism in the Niger Delta (Courson, 2011, p. 23). Like in other regions, these clandestine organizations constitute an integral part of the politics of the Niger Delta. These groups have played a key role in mobilizing political support for the regional politicians. Courson argues that in the 2003 Election, politicians in the Niger Delta provided both material benefits and arms to the militias and instigated them to attack their opponents (Courson, 2011, p. 28). He also notes that there was a report that a number of oil companies covertly assisted such activities to ensure the PDP victory (Courson, 2011, p. 28). Alhaji Dokubo-Asari, the leader of the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force, actively collaborated with his patron Governor Peter Odili of River State in rigging the election and mobilizing support (Courson, 2011, p. 29).

The arrest of Alamieyeseigha for corruption in 2005 provoked further insecurity in the Niger Delta. Like other political leaders in Nigeria, Alamieyeseigha had played the role of a political patron in the regional patronage network, through which he distributed material benefits to his supporters. His supporters included groups of militant youths, capable of mounting violent attacks and intimidation to mobilize votes during the elections. Adebanwi mentions the Ijaw Youth Council and Ebel Ebifemowei, who commanded militants and worked as the governor’s Special Assistant and enjoyed greater discretion than the deputy governor (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 145). This patrimonial link between Alamieyeseigha and these groups constituted a tool to counteract the corruption charges against him. On Alamieyeseigha’s arrest and trial in London, Oyeinfie Jonjon, the president of the Ijaw Youth Movement (IYM) urged the British authorities and the
Federal Government of Nigeria to release their “number one citizen”, suggesting the possibility of further deterioration of security of the oil companies and expatriate workers (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 140). Tensions escalated as a considerable number of the Ijaws felt that the federal government and the EFCC were selectively targeting the Ijaw leaders in their anti-corruption campaigns (this is largely the effect of the framing by the Alamieyeseigha’s supporters) (Courson, 2011, pp. 29-30). Asari was arrested for treason in 2005, shortly after Alamieyeseigha. The detention of Asari, who led the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Forces, gave rise to another militant organization, the Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND). The MEND leaders demanded the release of Alamieyeseigha and Asari, and there were more pipeline destructions and kidnap of foreign workers by its members (Courson, 2011, p. 34). As a result, oil production of Nigeria declined rapidly. Courson presents the statistics that show a sharp decline in oil production from 2005 when Alamiyeseigha was arrested (Courson, 2011, p. 31).

According to Agbiboa, it was announced by Obasanjo that in 2006, Nigeria lost $4 billion of potential oil revenues to various forms of violence inflicted by the militants (Agbiboa, 2012, p. 118). This had a devastating effect on the economy of Nigeria. Militias’ activities attracted media attention and inspired fears particularly among the expatriate workers and investors for further deterioration of security.

Obasanjo met this insurgency with militarization of this region. He deployed troops, which engaged in brutal repressions of the peoples in the areas suspected of hosting or supporting the youth gangs and militias (Courson, 2011, p. 28). An argument has been made that Obasanjo deployed armies to safeguard the corporate interests of the multinational oil companies. Courson argues that the government’s policy in dealing with
the insurgency was informed by the extent of its threat to oil companies and it selectively deployed the military to the communities that were seen to be protesting against oil companies or hosting the militants (Courson, 2011, p. 28). Militarization of the Niger Delta was part of the regime’s grand scheme to promote development by revamping foreign investments: it attempted to create a safer business environment for the oil companies by defeating the militants through repressive measures. However, such an attempt did not succeed in pacifying these areas, leading to a continued decline in oil production. In addition, although the governors of the oil-producing states supported the federal government, their cooperation to the central government was half-hearted. They also employed an “internally devised” method of distributing financial resources to the militants in order to avoid becoming a target (Courson, 2011, p. 33). Therefore, the government’s campaign to pacify Niger Delta through coercive means did not succeed.

Obasanjo left his office in 2007 with the completion of his terms. He appointed Umaru Yar’Adua as the new president, and Goodluck Jonathan became the new vice president. The change in leadership was entailed by a shift in the government’s approach to the militant youths in the Niger Delta. Unlike Obasanjo, who met the insurgencies with deployment of the military, the new leaders accepted the MEND’s condition for ceasing attacks. Both Asari and Alamieyeseigha were released from prison27 (Courson, 2011, p. 34). Yar’Adua signed the armistice with the militias, granting them amnesty and financial compensations (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 136). The appointment of Jonathan, an Ijaw leader from the Bayelsa State, who was Alamieyeseigha’s deputy, to the position of vice

27 Alamieyeseigha pleaded guilty and sentenced to two years in prison, but they counted the time of duration from the time of his arrest, so he virtually had to spend very short time from the armistice, and was released for serving the time sentenced.
president facilitated the concessions between the government and the militias. As a result of the armistice, violent conflict subsided, although fractional power struggles have persisted (Courson, 2011, p. 29). The inseparability of the clandestine organizations from politicians and the salience of risks in challenging the patrimonial networks in these areas forced the government to change tactics.

**Combating Corruption or Judicial Harassment by the Incumbent Leaders?**

Politicization of anti-corruption campaigns has been raised as one of the most predominant challenges facing the EFCC. It is alleged that the EFCC has been the president’s personal tool to harass his opponents and remove them from office on corruption charges (Agbiboa, 2012). Obasanjo allegedly unleashed the EFCC to remove his political opponents. In 2003, vice president Atiku Abubakar attempted without success to be the candidate for the presidential election by replacing Obasanjo (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Since then, there was a growing feud between the president and his deputy. Human Rights Watch Report argues that the political rivalries between them motivated Obasanjo to support the EFCC’s investigation on the case of theft of over $145 million, which was allegedly perpetrated by Abubakar (Human Rights Watch, 2007). This resulted in Abubakar’s decamping from the PDP. Obasanjo’s successor, Umaru Yar’Adua also faced a similar criticism. Shortly before 2007 Election, the EFCC published an advisory list of “corrupt and unfit candidates to hold public offices” (Obuah, 2010, p. 27). Emanuel Obuah analyzes this list and notes that the ruling People’s Democratic Party had the larger number of politicians listed than other parties: 53 out of 136 candidates were from the PDP (Obuah, 2010, p. 27). However, the Human Rights
Watch points out that the majority of the PDP candidates appeared on the list were the opponents of President Yar’Adua. It is also noted that this list omitted the names of the prominent and powerful politicians in the PDP who were widely denounced as corrupt, and there were press reports claiming that their names had been “struck off” by the president because they were his close allies (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

Some analysts dismiss Ribadu’s achievements as selective and ineffective. For instance, Inokoba and Ibegu (2011) argue that Ribadu only pursued the cases committed by the opponents of the president. However, Ribadu denied such an allegation. Osasu Obayiuwana (2009) conducted an interview with Ribadu. In this interview, Ribadu stated that he pursued corruption cases indiscriminately, saying he also investigated Obasanjo along with his family and supporters (Obayiuwana, 2009). In fact, Ribadu enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy in leading investigation of corruption cases committed by political elites. Adebanwi says that Obasanjo received requests for pardon from the friends and relatives of those detained for corruption, but he adamantly rejected these request, stating: “‘the boy’ (Ribadu) should be left to follow the rule” (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 44). Behind Ribadu’s autonomy there was Obasanjo’s intention to demonstrate his regime’s commitment to tackle corruption both internally and to the international community. As stated above, Obasanjo’s primary goal was to redeem Nigeria’s reputation in the international community. The EFCC under Ribadu enjoyed widespread admiration from a general public in Nigeria. Adebanwi refers to the opinion polls conducted by the newspaper, which shows widespread popular approval of the

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28 For more detail, see https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/africa/nigeria0407/6.htm#ftn110
achievement of the EFCC under Ribadu (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 350). Ribadu enjoyed greater admiration from the international organizations. Antonio Maria Costa, the Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ribadu as an indispensable leader in combating financial crimes (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 344). Given the popularity of Ribadu and his achievements in combating corruption, overt interference in his activities would jeopardize Obasanjo’s reputation particularly among the aid donors.

Inokoba and Ibegu’s critique on the lack of neutrality of the EFCC is important as it illuminates the two systemic obstacles that have arguably limited its effect in its pursuit of corruption cases. First, the constitutional guarantee of the incumbent politicians’ immunity from prosecution has been a great obstacle. Section 308 of the Constitution grants immunity to those who hold executive positions in the government including the president and state governors from being arrested and prosecuted for criminal charges (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 122). This has curtailed the effect of Ribadu’s autonomy in leading investigations of political elites, since he did not possess the authority to nullify their immunity. The discretion to impeach governors and remove their immunity rests on the states’ legislative assemblies. During his tenure, Obasanjo implemented authoritarian measures on the state governments such as the suspension of state budgets to facilitate the impeachment of state governors and nullify their immunities. He did so to three state governors: Alamieyeseigha of Bayelsa State, Joshua Dariye of Plateau State and Ayo Fayose of Ekiti State (Adebanwi. 2012, p. 265). The effect of lack of authority of the EFCC to prosecute the incumbent executives is more prominent in the case of corruption perpetrated by the president. In 2006, Obasanjo attempted to change the Nigerian Constitution to allow him to run for the third presidential term. It is reported that he
offered bribes to the members of the legislature to support this attempt, sabotaged formal meetings of those who opposed to it and threatened the state governors who did not support it by suggesting the possibility of their impeachment (Agibboa, 2012, p. 119). This attempt was eventually defeated and he nominated Yar’Adua as his successor who would run for the presidential election in 2007. This corrupt practice committed by Obasanjo was neither accused nor probed by the EFCC. Obasanjo continued to maintain political influence even after his retirement. This in fact validates the critique on the selectiveness of the EFCC’s activities in its pursuit of combating corruption.

Secondly, the presidential supremacy in appointment and removal of the chairperson of the EFCC has subjugated its position to the president. The president possesses the authority to nominate and remove the chairperson of the EFCC without consultation or approval from the legislature (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 28). Obasanjo withheld his discretion to remove Ribadu during his terms, due to his sensitivity to the international opinions and his intention to appeal to the international communities. However, his successor did not share the same intention. Shortly after Yar’Adua became the president, he sent Ribadu to the training session at the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS). He was forced to resign from the position as the Chairman of the EFCC due to his failure to report his completion of the training (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 343). Alienation of Ribadu by Yar’Adua was assisted by those individuals who had been the beneficiaries of corruption. Ribadu’s removal was aided by a few journalists recruited by “anti-Ribadu forces” to write stories to disfavor him and denounce his activities (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 371). Ribadu’s removal became the object of criticism from various intellectuals both from within and outside Nigeria. For
instance, Wole Soyinka, who was one of Ribadu’s “strongest moral pillars and supporters”, termed his removal as an “Unholy Pursuit” to ostracize a “faithful servant of the nation” (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 367). Such criticisms did not affect Yar’Adua’s decision. He appointed Farida Waziri as the new chairperson of the EFCC.

**Post-Ribadu EFCC**

Under Waziri, the EFCC continued to lead the investigations and prosecutions of corruption cases that involved prominent individuals in the government. However, there was a widespread perception that the new chairperson had undermined its performance in prosecuting and convicting these cases (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 16). Human Rights Watch report challenges the view that attributes the EFCC’s ineffectiveness to the chairperson’s lack of commitment. In fact, the effect of the EFCC was subverted mainly by the political elites’ interventions in its activities. Human Rights Watch evaluates the performance of the EFCC in prosecuting the political elites for corrupt practices. It argues that although by 2011, 30 “nationally prominent” politicians had been interrogated by the EFCC, most of these cases have not been convicted and some cases were struck down, due to active interventions of the Attorney General and the president (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 26). It cites a leaked cable from the US ambassador in Nigeria, which reported that he was informed by Waziri that the Attorney General overtly sabotaged her attempts to investigate “politically sensitive cases” and prosecute prominent politicians (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 30). In 2010, as done by Ribadu, the EFCC under Waziri published the Advisory List of Corrupt and Unfit Politicians for the upcoming 2011 Election, and presented it to the public via its organization website. However, this list
was quickly removed from the website as a result of “a storm of protests” by prominent politicians whose names appeared on the list (Oke, 2014, p. 59). Ibrahim Lamorde replaced Waziri in November 2011, and he has remained in this position to this day. The manner in which the EFCC under his leadership has tackled corruption cases also reflects a strong influence of the president.

There are two tendencies in the EFCC’s approach to corruption after Ribadu’s removal. First, politicians’ immunity or vulnerability is largely determined by the patrimonial favour by the powerful political leaders of the ruling party. Gbenga Daniel, former governor of Osun State, whose active cooperation with Obasanjo played a key role in expanding the PDP’s stronghold in Yoruba-speaking region, was interrogated by the EFCC for corruption charges in October, 2011 (The Nigerian Voice, 2015). What underlies this event is the split between Obasanjo, who has maintained his political influence after his retirement, and Daniel over the candidateship for the gubernatorial election held in the same year. In this election, Obasanjo supported Daniel’s political rival to be an official candidate from the People’s Democratic Party (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 39). As a result of this split, Daniel could not run for the election in 2011 and he left his party (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 39). The loss of his position as a state governor made him vulnerable to the accusation on the grounds of corruption, because it deprived him of the access to the resources fundamental to maintain his patrimonial networks. It also divested him of the immunity from prosecution. A combination of these factors has reduced the risk associated with prosecuting him. Such a tendency is more prominent in the EFCC’s pursuit of the cases which involve the opposition leaders. Former governor of Adamawa State, Murtala Nyako is the only governor in post-Obasanjo Nigeria to be
impeached on corruption charges. Like in cases of Alamieyeseigha and other state
governors who were impeached by Obasanjo on corruption charges, the EFCC, with the
support of the then president Goodluck Jonathan, suspended Adamawa State’s bank
accounts as “a precautionary measure to safeguard the state treasury amidst evidence of
looting” (Isine, 2015). Facing such a pressure, the majority members of Adamawa State
Assembly signed the impeachment notice. Nyako was impeached in July 2014, and on
February 4 2015 the EFCC declared him and his son wanted for money laundering (Isine,
2015). He is still at large as of May 14th, 2015. Attention must be paid to the fact that
Nyako was an opposition governor, representing the All Progressive Congress. This
shows how the rhetoric of combating corruption is used by the president to challenge his
opponents.

Secondly, punishment against big-time corruption has been lenient and
rehabilitation of its perpetrators has been relatively easy. The cases of Joshua Dariye,
former governor of Plateau State, and Olabode George exemplify this point. Joshua
Dariye, former governor of Plateau State, was probed and arraigned for his corruption
charges, but he was able to run for the election in 2011 and won a seat at the Federal
House of Assembly (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 28). As of 2015, Dariye has not been
sentenced. Dariye decamped from the PDP to the APC in April 2015, as the result of the
APC victory in the general election held in the same year (Odunsi, 2015). This will make
it more difficult to prosecute and sentence him with a strict punishment. This case shows
that even those who are undergoing investigation or probing for corruption charges may
run for elections and become elected or re-elected. Olabode George, an influential power
broker for the PDP and former Nigerian Ports Authority chairman, was sentenced to two
and a half years in prison for contract-related offences in 2009. While it was a successful case of conviction of a corrupt leader, it has shown how easy it is for a corrupt politician to be rehabilitated into a society (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 27). When Olabode George was released from prison in February 2011, there was a “lavish welcome ceremony” held for him and attended by the members of the “ruling-party establishment” including Obasanjo (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 27). Ease at which George was rehabilitated is contrasted by the severity of the sanction imposed on the judge who convicted him. The Lagos State judge Olubunmi Oyewole, who sent George to prison, was removed from the criminal matters and sent to a family court (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 27). Human Rights Watch reports that it was widely believed by the people in Nigeria that this demotion was motivated by the president and other prominent leaders of the ruling party (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 27). Lenience of the sanction against corrupt political leaders and the ease at which those leaders are rehabilitated into the society indicate the risks associated with sanctioning the prominent political leaders, who play a key role in the patronage networks in distributing resource to their supporters. Persecution of these leaders may antagonize their supporters, who will in turn agitate a society.

(Ab)use of the EFCC as a Rational Response to Volatility: Volatility in the Fourth Republic:

Critical argument on the lack of neutrality of the EFCC illuminates structural obstacles to combating corruption indiscriminately. It also points to actual cases where the rhetoric of combating corruption was abused by the president to persecute his opponents. However, in order to illustrate the issues more comprehensively, it is also
necessary to situate these systemic obstacles and individual cases in the context of volatile and risky politics of Nigeria. Obasanjo’s personalization of the EFCC is driven by his need to counteract the insecurity of his position. His rivalry against his deputy, Atiku Abubakar has greatly threatened the position of Obasanjo. He reacted to this threat by unleashing the EFCC to stigmatize Abubakar and depose him from his position.

Similarly, Ya’Adua’s intolerance of Ribadu was dictated by his perception of insecurity and his reliance on the political elites who were investigated for corruption. Ribadu investigated and prosecuted prominent political elites, many of who sponsored president Yar’Adua during election. For instance, James Ibori, former governor of Delta State, was arrested for money laundering, but he financed Yar’Adua’s presidential campaign in 2007 (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 268). Attorney General Michael Aondoakaa sabotaged the prosecution of Ibori (Human Rights Watch, 2011, pp. 29-30). Human Rights Watch suggests that this act of obstruction was conducted as an order from Yar’Adua. They consolidate this point by referring to the US embassy cables exposed by the Wikileaks that Aondoakaa was “reputed to have done some of Yar’Adua’s dirty work” (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 30). Max Siollun comments that some state governors and his supporters who were investigated for corruption cases “orchestrated” the purge of Ribadu (Siollun, 2015). His argument is that Ribadu’s puritanical manner in handling corruption cases created too many enemies, and it eventually resulted in his removal from the EFCC.

Ribadu, recalling his own resignation from the EFCC, remarked “when you fight corruption, corruption fights back” (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 341). Adebanwi views Ribadu’s resigning as “corruption of the fight against corruption” (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 344). Ribadu’s indiscriminate stance in pursuing corrupt leaders challenged the president’s
political standings and it became the major cause of his removal from the EFCC.

However, it is misleading to argue that Ribadu’s removal was solely driven by the president’s individual greed to maintain his position. The factors that are more fundamental to the nature of the politics of Nigeria motivated him to defeat Ribadu’s anti-corruption campaign.

Political patronage is the elites’ rational response to the salience of risks and volatilities of the politics. Despite his sincerity and commitment in combating corruption, Ribadu’s activities did not address the volatile and risky nature of the politics of Nigeria. As shown by how detention and prosecution of Alamieyeseigha exacerbated the insurgency in the Niger Delta, attempts to challenge the fundamental basis of patrimonial networks may challenge the territorial integrity of the federation. Adebanwi argues that Yar’Adua granted amnesty and fiscal compensation to the militants in the Niger Delta, because he “got tired of its war of attrition” and decided to compromise with them rather than confront them (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 136). Based on this fact, following explanation can be deduced. Facing the failure of his predecessor’s attempt to pacify this region through coercive measures, Yar’Adua was more willing to compromise with the militants. To actualize an armistice with the militants, it was necessary to release Alamieyeseigha and Dokubo-Asari. However, Ribadu would object to the plans to release them. Therefore, he was perceived as a great obstacle to achieve the goal of pacifying the region. Based on this perception, the new president chose to sabotage Ribadu’s activities and he eventually removed him from the EFCC. As the result of this decision, patronage has persisted and it continues to harbour corrupt practices.
In many respects, Ribadu was a deviant actor who was genuinely committed to combating corruption in a social setting where this issue is generally met with apathy. Ribadu’s commitment in combating corruption is also shown by his willingness to prosecute the elites from his home region. Despite being a Northerner and he faced considerable pressure from the northern elites to do “favours” in return for bribery, Ribadu was able to resist such pressures (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 309). Ribadu’s activities have defied the principles and the implicit rules of patrimonial politics, which constitute the fundamental ground on which corruption has thrived. His activities enjoyed a degree of tolerance from Obasanjo during his regime, but such acts were sanctioned in the following regime and resulted in his removal from the EFCC\textsuperscript{29}.

**Data Analysis of the EFCC Cases:**

In the previous part of this paper, it is identified that the patrimonial networks have been essential tools to maintain stability in a risky and volatile political environment in Nigeria. The multitude of group and factional interests and the concentration of power on the political leaders have made political contests a fierce competition over the limited access to the state resources. Obasanjo effectively crafted and utilized the patronage ties to win the cooperation of the regional elites in the Yoruba-speaking regions. This has reduced the extent of violence in these areas. Similar attempts were taken by Yar’Adua and Jonathan to reach an agreement on the armistice with the militias in the oil-rich Niger Delta. These facts imply that uncompromising attempts to tackle corruption may challenge the very basis of patronage and agitate the risky political circumstances. This

\textsuperscript{29} As of 2011, there are four cases in which the prominent politicians are prosecuted: Tafa Balogun, Alamieyeseigha, Olabode George and Lucky Igbinedion (Human Rights Watch, 2011, pp. 23-25).
point is consolidated by how arrest and prosecution of D. S. P. Alamieyeseigha for corruption aggravated the scale of violence in the Niger Delta. Attempts to challenge the prominent and powerful elites may cause adverse consequences to the security and territorial integrity. Based on this point, it is presumed that the EFCC under the new leaders has avoided convicting the elites, particularly the state governors. It is necessary to probe this presumption by looking at the recent pattern of the EFCC’s attempt to tackle corruption more comprehensively. To accomplish this task, it is essential to analyze specific cases that it has prosecuted and convicted in the recent years and identify how many of these cases involved prominent politicians.

There are two sources of data utilized in this analysis. First, the EFCC provides annual reports of convictions. These are available for the years 2013 and 2014, and each of them provides the case number, dates of arraignment and conviction, names of the perpetrators and the accused, names of the courts and judges that convicted the cases and the verdicts for all cases. Secondly, an archive of the EFCC’s press release provides information on the cases whose perpetrators are arrested, arraigned and convicted from January 2012. EFCC’s annual report is not available for the years prior to 2013. Therefore, it was necessary to rely on the press release as a sole source of data for the year 2012. Due to the lack of a more detailed and comprehensive source for particular cases for 2012, there is a possibility that there are cases dealt by the EFCC but do not appear in its press release. However, it is less likely that the corruption cases involving prominent politicians are not reported. Therefore, press release archive is still a valid

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30 EFCC annual reports for the years 2013 and 2014 were retrieved at [https://efccnigeria.org/efcc/index.php/convictions](https://efccnigeria.org/efcc/index.php/convictions)
source to consult for the analysis. Analysis of these sets of data enables one to assess the pattern of how this anti-corruption agency has approached corruption. The findings of the analysis reveals that the predominant majority of the cases prosecuted and convicted are so-called petty corruption, committed by individuals whose social statuses are insignificant.

In 2012, the EFCC released information on the total of 104 cases (excluding reports on twelve cases that are that had been dealt since preceding years). In that year, there were reports of five cases that involved politicians, of which three cases involved politicians of relatively insignificant status, who did not enjoy immunity from being arrested and prosecuted. 1) Yahaya Abubakar, former Chairman of Okene Local Government Area in Kogi State, was prosecuted for abuse of office for private profit\(^{31}\). 2) Adeyemi Ikuforiji, speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly and his personal assistant were arraigned for fraud and money laundering\(^{32}\). 3) Kasimu Lawal Abubakar, former chairman of Sabon Gari Local Government, Zaria, Kaduna, was arrested upon petition for abuse of office for self-enrichment. Among the five cases that involved politicians, there were two cases that involved the politicians of significant status\(^{33}\). 1) Ayo Fayose, former governor of Ekiti State, was re-arraigned for fraud (he was first arraigned in 2007)\(^{34}\). 2) Adebayo Alao-Akala, former Oyo State Governor was


prosecuted for money laundering, conspiracy and illegal award of contracts. None of these five politicians were convicted in 2012.\(^{35}\)

In 2012, there were reports on 95 cases committed by private individuals including the individuals that are self-employed, office workers, bankers and executives and accountants of private companies. The activities for which these individuals were arraigned or prosecuted include fraud, acquisition of money under false pretence, illegal transportation of currency, illegal extraction of oil and currency counterfeiting. Three cases involved public servants. 1) A group of police officers were arrested for police pension scam case and for interfering with the properties that the court had ordered forfeited to the federal government.\(^{36}\) 2) Two EFCC officers were prosecuted and jailed for bribery.\(^{37}\) 3) An official at the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria was arrested for money laundering and smuggling of currency.\(^{38}\) There was a report of one case that involved a lawyer. Barrister Christian Chukwudozie Ebuzoeme was arraigned and remanded for fraud. One case involved a member of a Development Committee: Dayo Ilagunju, former Executive Secretary of the National Commission of Mass Literacy, was re-arraigned for fraud, criminal conspiracy and misappropriation of public funds (perpetrator was first arraigned in 2009).

In 2013, the EFCC convicted no politician. The EFCC prosecuted and convicted 117 cases on total. Out of these cases, 112 cases involved private individuals, including


those who are self-employed, those who work for private companies, bankers and students. These individuals were sentenced for activities including frauds (including internet scam and banking fraud), attempts to obtain money or other properties by false pretense, misappropriation of funds, illegal possession and forgery of currency, money laundering, and illegal dealing of petroleum products (EFCC, 2014). The EFCC convicted three cases which involved public servants. 1) A police officer involved in a police pension scam was sentenced to a fine of N 250,000 (EFCC, 2014). 2) A manager of Dan Wali bureau de change was sentenced to three years imprisonment or the option of N 300,000 fine for obtaining money by false pretense (EFCC, 2014). 3) Ibrahim Maigari Belo, former chairman and assistant secretary of Yorro Local Government Area branch of National Union of Local Government Employees, was sentenced to nine years imprisonment or N 75,000 fine for obtaining by false pretense (EFCC, 2014). One case involved a family of a politician who held a prominent position. A son of Alhaji Sule Lamido, Jigawa State Governor, was convicted for money laundering and 25% of his undeclared funds were forfeited (EFCC, 2014). One case involved a non-elected chairman of a local government council. Enesi Jomoh Suleiman, former Caretaker Chairman of Adavi Local Government Area of Kogi State, was sentenced to six months imprisonment for embezzling of funds (EFCC, 2014).

In 2014, the EFCC prosecuted and convicted 126 cases. Out of this figure, 119 cases were committed by private individuals including students, those who are self-employed, individuals holding various positions in private corporations and bankers. These individuals were sentenced for activities such as fraud, obtaining money on the false pretense, misappropriation of funds, illegal deal of oil and petroleum products and
There were five cases which involved public servants. 1) A manager of Dan Wali Bureau de Change was sentenced for six months in prison for criminal misappropriation. 2) Two staff of the Ogun State (detail of the perpetrator not presented) were prosecuted and one of them was sentenced to two years imprisonment for stealing from the salary accounts belonging to Ogun State Staff, Police, and Basic Education Staff (EFCC, 2015). 3) A member of National Service Corps was sentenced to three years imprisonment for ATM card fraud (EFCC, 2015). 4) A public servant (position not presented) was sentenced to three years imprisonment for criminal breach of trust (EFCC, 2015). 5) The manager of Mai Sabulu Breau de Change was sentenced to serve four months in prison for criminal breach of trust and theft (EFCC, 2015). In 2014, there was one convicted case that involved former politician. Suleiman Aliyu, a chieftain of the People’s Redemption Party, was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment for criminal breach of trust (EFCC, 2015). There was one case which involved a member of a committee funded by government. A member of TB and Leprosy Control Programme in Northern Nigeria was sentenced to one year in prison for cheating, criminal breach of trust and misappropriation of funds (EFCC, 2015).

The findings of the analysis reveal the following tendency with regards to the manner in which the EFCC has tackled corruption. The EFCC predominantly prosecutes and convicts vulnerable individuals, who are neither immune to prosecution nor capable of posing threats to the positions of its leaders. The majority of the cases the EFCC has arraigned and persecuted are so called petty corruption, perpetrated by individuals of relatively insignificant social standings. These cases include illicit extraction of money and other assets and resources by self-employed individuals, students, public servants,
bankers or staff of private companies. From 2012 to 2014, there has only been one politician convicted and sentenced by the EFCC. In 2014, Suleiman Aliyu, a chieftain of the People’s Redemption Party, was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment for criminal breach of trust and misappropriation of funds. The status of Aliyu is relatively insignificant. His party, People’s Redemption Party, was organized in the Second Republic, and was reorganized in 1999. This party has failed to attain seats at the federal legislature. From this fact, it is assumed that Aliyu and his party has been deprived of access to resources necessary to finance his supporters particularly those capable of mobilizing political supports through violent measures. Therefore, the risks associated with prosecuting and convicting Aliyu for corruption is presumed to be minimal. There have been at least two former state governors who were arraigned for corruption charges, but none of them have been convicted to this day. These findings support the aforementioned hypothesis that there has been an implicit, yet palpable restraint on the EFCC’s activities in prosecuting and convicting prominent politicians, particularly the state governors, who are capable of orchestrating violent resistance by instigating clandestine groups to agitate the society.

**Part 4: Argument and Conclusion:**

**Why Corruption Persists in Nigeria:**

In this paper, it is identified that democracy has historically been embraced as the most desirable form of governance in Nigeria. However, its regional fragmentation and the rivalries between groups and factions over the access to the public resources have made the politics of this country risky and volatile. This particular political environment has fostered patronage as a tool for the elites to counteract insecurity. Amid such
circumstances, the most predominant task for the leaders is to maintain social order and territorial integrity by creating and sustaining an inclusive patronage network, which allows a widespread allocation of the resources across the regions. This confirms Alex de Waal’s concept of “robust and inclusive buy-in”, which refers to the leaders’ patrimonial distribution of resources to acquire allegiance of the groups capable of agitating the security and their positions (De Waal, 2009, p. 112). According to de Waal, the leaders who preside over this transaction are required to prevent the political systems from becoming “unstuck” (De Waal, 2009, p. 112). Based on this point and from the findings of this paper, it is identified that unsuccessful attempts to establish democracy from 1960 to 1966 and from 1979 to 1983 are the results of the leaders’ inabilities to fulfill this requirement. Politics has been a fierce competition between groups and factions over the monopoly of power and resources. The leaders of both the First and the Second republic neglected the salience of the pressures from the regional entities excluded from the benefit of monopoly. Such pressures were great enough to agitate the social order and trigger the violent events that toppled these regimes. The findings of this paper is that the persistence of democracy in the current Fourth Republic is attributed to the skills with which the leaders have avoided the collapse of this political system by crafting a patrimonial network that is more proportionate to the multiplicity of the regions and utilized it to manufacture the allegiance from the leaders of these regions. When Obasanjo became elected as the president and monopolized the political apparatus, he became the grand patron and engineered a resource allocation system to win the cooperation of the prominent politicians in the Yoruba-speaking regions. Yar’Adua and his successor Goodluck Jonathan adopted similar tactics to pacify the insurgency in the
Niger Delta regions. It was estimated that in 2012, Nigeria spent approximately $450 million on its amnesty program in the Niger Delta. Hinshaw (2012) explains that this amount exceeds Nigeria’s budget for delivering basic education to children (Hinshaw, 2012). As shown by this fact, maintaining security through patronage is costly.

As Hoffman and Nolte (2013) point out, the enormity in the amount of money dispensed to win the allegiance of the opponents has been an obstacle for the leaders to sustain their positions. This point provides a clue in explaining how the PDP lost the 2015 election. Hoffman and Nolte explain how the reduction of the resources allocated from the central government to the Yoruba-speaking regions induced the PDP’s defeat in these regions in 2011 election. After the PDP secured its victory in 2003, it reduced the amount of funds allocated to these regions (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 44). Reduction of the resources distributed to the regional elites caused their defection to the Action Congress, an opposition party led by Bola Tinubu (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 44). Succeeding in achieving a decisive electoral victory in these regions in 2011, Tinubu sought to extend his support base to the other regions by recruiting prominent politicians, particularly the rivals of the president. His party recruited the former vice president Atiku Abubakar, who had a strong support base in the Northern states (Hoffman & Nolte, 2013, p. 41). In 2013, Action Congress merged with three other opposition parties, All Nigeria Peoples Party, All Progressive Grand Alliance and Congress for Progressive Change, to form a new party All Progressive Congress39 (All Progressive Congress website, 2015). Muhammadu Buhari became the leader of this party. Assisted by Tinubu’s previous efforts in winning cooperation from prominent politicians in the North, the formation of

39 Further detail of the formation of the APC is provided at the APC official website at http://apc.com.ng/index.php/about-apc.
the APC combined the support bases and patronage networks in the wider range of regions across the federation. This became the most predominant factor for the APC victory in 2015 election. The areas in which APC secured victory are concentrated in the Western and Northern regions (Nigeria Elections, 2015). On the other hand, a predominant majority of the voters in the Niger Delta regions, where patrimonial distribution of funds was concentrated under President Jonathan, voted for the PDP⁴⁰ (Nigeria Elections, 2015). This shows that the nature of patronage system has shaped the voting patterns of the people.

**Critique on Argument that Calls for Challenging Patronage:**

Although de Waal identifies the patrimonial “buy-in” as a viable option to attain security in a volatile political environment, he identifies two downsides to this method. First, such a transaction functions only if the network that sustains it remains stable (De Waal, 112). This means that any attempt to agitate the patronage system causes an adverse outcome. This point is substantiated by how Ribadu’s anti-corruption campaign has in fact aggravated the scale of violence in oil-producing Niger Delta. Corruption has persisted in Nigeria since its independence to this day. Ribadu views corruption as “one connecting factor in the failure of all attempts to govern Nigeria” (Adebanwi, 2012, p. 383). Courson (2011), Gore and Pratten (2003) and Agbiboa (2012) share this perspective and argue that reduction of corruption is crucial in ending violence and facilitating development. Courson explains that the rise of militias in oil-rich Niger Delta is a result of corruption among the ruling elites, which has prevented effective redistribution of the

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⁴⁰ For further detail, visit Nigeria Elections’ website at [http://nigeriaelections.org/result](http://nigeriaelections.org/result).
oil profit to the inhabitants of this region (Courson, 2011, p. 23-24). Similarly, Charles Gore and David Pratten view that the widespread youth activism and prevalence of violence in Nigeria as a product of the “politics of plunder” (Gore & Pratten, 2003, p. 211). Courson emphasizes the need to eradicate the “culture of impunity and the lack of accountability” of the politicians as an essential step to resolve the issue of violence (Courson, 2011, p. 38). It is evident that impoverishment and destitution constitute a significant factor for the rise of the militants. However, it is also true that these militants rely on corrupt leaders. As shown by how prosecution of Alamieyeseigha agitated the security of the Niger Delta, it is clear that the removal of prominent political elites for corruption threatens the systemic basis of patronage that would pacify the militias through distribution of resources. Yar’Adua achieved armistice with the militias by accepting their demands to release Alamieyeseigha and by compensating them financially (Courson, 2011, p. 34). Although this has not stopped illicit activities, it has reduced the scale of violence in the Niger Delta (Courson, 2011, p. 29). This shows that maintaining security in a volatile political environment requires the leaders to appease the groups or individuals who are powerful enough to agitate the security.

Agbiboa explains the persistence of corruption in Nigeria by applying the public-choice theory. He views the political leaders as “self-interested utility maximizers”, who are driven by their interests in extracting benefits from corrupt practices (Agbiboa, 2012, p. 127). He argues that corruption has persisted in Nigeria because the leaders are not willing to tackle this issue and abandon their privileges (Agbiboa, 2012, p. 127). Agbiboa’s argument is that corruption does not end unless they tackle the systemic basis of this issue. Specifically, he calls for two changes; 1) constitutional reforms to reduce
the power of central government and grant more autonomy to the subnational
governments and 2) consolidation of the judiciary and the police to enhance the
of rules and regulations facilitates an institutional change and creation of a society that
rewards sincerity and ethical conduct (Agbiboa, 2012, p. 126). It is apparent that
individual corrupt practices are largely driven by the self-interests of perpetrators.
However, individuals’ greed is not the only factor that drives corruption; it is also deeply
embedded in the structural factors that are particular to Nigeria. Patronage and corruption
is the leaders’ rational response to the volatile and risky political circumstances, and
effective management of patronage system is crucial in minimizing the chances of violent
conflict. Ribadu’s pursuit of corrupt politicians was an act of strict enforcement of rules
and regulations. This approach has threatened and antagonized many prominent
politicians. In reaction to this campaign, these elites orchestrated Ribadu’s removal from
the EFCC, and eventually defeated his campaign to combat corruption. Therefore, a strict
enforcement of rules without addressing the salience of risks and volatilities in political
environment may cause an adverse outcome.

Secondly, patronage is a network that fosters corruption. De Waal describes the
process of patrimonial “buy-in” as granting of a “license for corruption” (De Waal, 2009,
p. 112). Change in leadership is accompanied by crafting of a new patronage network.
When Yar’Adua succeeded the presidency from Obasanjo, he inherited the patrimonial
power to allocate funds and other resources to the state governors. While he eagerly
exploited this power to secure his position, he was less enthusiastic than his predecessor
in appearing as the leader committed to the mission to combat corruption. Due to this
fact, Ribadu was removed from the EFCC and corruption and patronage continued to prevail in Nigeria. The prevalence of patronage systems has prevented the institutionalization of formal rules and regulations. It has also perpetuated the uncertainty in political processes in Nigeria. This contributes to a greater propensity for the leaders to resort to violence to command supports and secure their positions. Once they secured their offices by winning the elections, the leaders must reward their sponsors with provision of jobs and financial returns. Failure to do so may threaten their positions, since these groups are capable of inflicting violence and destruction. Widespread mobilization of violence in politics has compromised the principles of democracy, since it has encouraged systematic manipulations of the electoral processes. Human Rights Watch remarks that electoral processes are “stolen more than won”, and the depth at which the politicians are embedded in these illicit processes has undermined the neutrality of the EFCC to monitor the conduct of the politicians (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 26).

Effective management of patronage networks is a critical tool to reduce the chances for and the scale of violent conflicts. Although it maintains a relative security, this type of political interaction also keeps the social environment and the civic lives of the mass precarious, because in such circumstances, the majority of the public resources are consumed by the leaders. Remi E. Aiyede describes this system as an “elite appeasement structure” (Aiyede, 2013, p. 116). He states that re-introduction of democracy has enabled the leaders to allocate the funds and revenues to powerful regional elites. Although this has minimized the chances for violent conflicts that challenge the territorial integrity of the federation, such a political arrangement has diverted a great amount of resources from development projects (Aiyede, 2013, p. 116). Aiyede laments that the
resources that are monopolized by the elites could have been spent for the improvement of the lives of the masses. Disempowerment and impoverishment of the masses have accelerated petty corruption. Adebanwi articulates this point by illustrating the following incident. When Ribadu visited local government areas he was sighted by a group of unemployed youths, who ran to him, praised his achievements and demanded money from him: they said “you are the man, Ribadu, find us something” (Adebanwi, 2012, pp. 374-375). This description conforms to Olivier de Sardan’s explanation of the contradicting realities where ordinary citizens’ preference for reduction of corruption has not prevented them from engaging in such conduct. Ribadu’s pursuit of big-time corruption, committed by those at the top of the government, was praised by the ordinary citizens, since they were neither involved nor the beneficiaries of such practices. However, Ribadu’s activities did not bring material benefits that they desperately needed to make their lives secure. Persistence of poverty has continued to encourage the mass to engage in illicit activities to secure their lives.

Khan differentiates malignant corruption from corruption of benign nature (Khan, 2006). He terms corruption aimed at maintaining order and security as benign and it may be beneficial to a society (Khan, 2006, p. 215). However, the finding of this paper has shown the difficulty of differentiating malignant corruption from the one that is benign. The leaders’ reliance on patronage networks is dictated by security. It is shown that effective exploitation of such networks plays a crucial role in maintaining a relative order in a risky political environment. Based on this point, it is understood that the big-time corruption in Nigeria that involves the leaders’ monopoly and allocation of the public resources to the prominent regional elites is benign. However, the relative social order
attained through patronage is actualized at the cost of the welfare of the mass. Khan terms corrupt practices such as extortions by public servants as malignant, and he emphasizes that the anti-corruption campaign must selectively target these activities (Khan, 2006, p. 209). However, these acts are merely the outcome of the underpayment of public servants caused by the elites’ embezzlement of public funds. Therefore, the issue of extortions by public servants will persist unless they address the issue of the leaders’ embezzlement of public funds. An attempt to combat this big-time corruption challenges the patronage network, posing a critical threat to the security. This dilemma has prevented effective and sincere attempts to combat corruption.

**Prospects for the Future:**

Patronage is a process in which the leaders decide who gets what, when and how much. Patronage under the current democratic regime has worked in a way that dispensed the force that attracted the regional elites to the central government and the ruling party. This has sustained both the political structures and territorial integrity of the federation, yet at the expense of the lives and welfare of the mass. The primacy of patronage in the politics has subverted the performance of the EFCC, whose original aim was to combat corruption. The EFCC is now under a strong influence of the president. Analysis of the cases that the EFCC has convicted for the last three years shows that its primary focus has been on the pursuit of petty corruption, committed by politically insignificant individuals, who are not capable of posing threats to the leaders’ positions. This tendency is the product of the leaders’ effort to fulfill the dual task of maintaining the security of their positions and appearing to be meeting the demand for combating corruption.
The president has exploited the rhetoric of combating corruption to challenge and remove their opponents, and the EFCC has been exploited as a tool to accomplish this task. As a result, the abuse of such rhetoric and the functions of an anti-graft agency have been integrated in the framework of democracy in Nigeria. They serve the president’s interests to maintain power by defeating or removing his opponents on the ground of their involvement in corrupt practices. By doing so, the president gains an advantage in winning the popular support by presenting his stance to combat corruption. However, it is also identified that the leaders cannot go too far in prosecuting and punishing the prominent politicians for corruption, since they are capable of agitating the social order and challenging the security of the president. This is the reason why the EFCC has not convicted corruption perpetrated by prominent politicians, particularly the former governors, and why the predominant majority of the individuals that it convicted are those whose social status is relatively insignificant.

Based on this tendency, it is argued that anti-corruption campaigns in Nigeria will continue to be compromised by the leaders’ intentions to counteract the risks in politics. The greatest and primary tasks for the new president Buhari and his associate are to secure his position and maintain the territorial integrity of the federation. Buhari’s previous career in the military regime, in which he launched a campaign to combat corruption, has established his image as an uncompromising anti-corruption crusader (Siollun, 2015). During his election campaign in 2015, Buhari demonstrated to the public his abstinence from extravagance in the use of public resources; he dressed modestly and mobilized a humble size of security convoy in his election rallies (York, 2015). In fact, he is widely perceived by his supporters as “selfless, disciplined and incorruptible”, and
Geoffrey York observes that such an appearance has assisted him in gaining a “cult following” and popular support, leading to the APC victory in the 2015 election (York, 2015). This argument is contrasted to Chabal and Daloz’s description of the electoral processes in Africa, where the public display of extravagance is a crucial tool for the candidates to command respect and attract support, since it signifies their capabilities to distribute the spoils of patronage to their supporters (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, p. 34). It is undeniable that Buhari’s charisma and his public stance to combat corruption are an important aspect of his victory in the latest election. However, as discussed above, my argument is that the skills with which Bola Tinubu mobilized resources to create a new patrimonial ties to challenge Jonathan and the PDP played a more significant role in this event. By absorbing Buhari and prominent politicians in Yoruba-speaking regions and the Northern states, who were capable of commanding supports in these regions, Tinubu was able to enhance the popularity of the APC.

APC proclaims combating corruption as one of its primary objectives41. However, Buhari’s approach to corruption needs to address the following points. First, challenging those in the inner-circle of the governing elites may threaten the president’s standing in the government. Upon Buhari’s victory over the presidential election, Max Siollun (2015) explains how Buhari’s uncompromising stance in his campaign to combat corruption when he served as the military leader has induced a coup in 1985, which deposed him from power. Based on this fact, Siollun says that Buhari is in a dilemma between waging “an all-out anti-corruption war” and conducting a selective campaign that turns a blind

41 Combating corruption is included as one of the core pillars of the APC’s party manifesto. More detailed information is available in APC’s website: (http://apc.com.ng/index.php/about-apc/apc-manifesto).
eye to the conduct of the powerful individuals with vested interests; the former may enhance Buhari’s popularity but will risk his position, while the latter will secure his position but will make his reputation tainted (Siollun, 2015). Secondly, challenging the opposition leaders, including the former president and the ministers who had perpetrated corruption in previous regime, and the powerful regional elites representing the opposition party, may challenge the territorial integrity of the federation. This point is particularly relevant to the result of 2015 election. Although the APC won the majority votes in 21 states in the Northern and the Western regions, the PDP has maintained its stronghold in oil-rich states in Niger Delta\(^2\) (Nigeria Elections, 2015). This indicates a potential risk of antagonism of these regions against the central government. The extent to which the leaders rely on the oil revenues for their budget also highlights the necessity for concessions with the governors of oil-producing states. In these circumstances, challenging the regional elites in the Niger Delta for corruption may result in the recurrence of a conflict in these regions. Uncompromising pursuit of anti-corruption campaign will make the country insecure.

Sustaining democracy in Nigeria requires the leaders’ sensitivities to the volatility of the political surroundings. In order to accomplish this task, they need to handle the patronage networks effectively, while maintaining their appearance as combating corruption. Diamond (1988) emphasizes the need to establish a framework of “mutual security” to sustain a democratic governance in a heterogeneous and factionalized political environment. He argues that the institutionalization of post-electoral concessions between the new leader and the outgoing leader, who was defeated in the election, may

\(^2\) For more information, see [http://nigeriaelections.org/result](http://nigeriaelections.org/result).
facilitate a “confidence that defeat will not mean political obliteration and victory will be tempered by conciliation” (Diamond, 1988, p. 80). During the election, Buhari made a pledge that he would not “witch-hunt” the opposition leaders in his campaign to fight corruption (Wallis, 2015). Following his victory, Buhari reaffirmed this pledge (International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 2015). Buhari’s pledge to combat corruption and his assurance of the security of his predecessors appear to conform to the paradigm of sustaining democracy. The prospects for the future development of democracy in Nigeria and the role of corruption in this process are as follows. First, the EFCC will continue to pursue a relatively easy and less harmful task of prosecuting and convicting the cases perpetrated by those whose social standings are insignificant. Second, although the leaders may continue to utilize the EFCC to challenge their opponents, sanctions placed on the prominent politicians will continue be lenient, since an imposition of harsh penalty on them will cause violent consequences to the leadership and to a society as a whole. Third, in order to maintain order, the leaders must maintain a constant flow of the resources to the prominent regional elites by crafting and utilizing a strong patronage network. Therefore, patronage will continue to play the central role in sustaining democratic governance in Nigeria, which is characterized by its socio-cultural heterogeneity. As long as patronage persists as the basis of political transactions, corruption will remain prevalent, and the attempts to challenge this system will cause agonizing consequences to governance and social order.
Works Cited


