Corruption: The Bane of Democratic Stability in Nigeria

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Abstract: Nigeria’s democracy has remained grossly unstable since the country returned to democratic form of governance in 1999. The political terrain has been characterised by violent ethno-religious crisis, contract killing and political assassinations, inter and intra-party fracas and civil disobedience. At the heart of democratic instability in Nigeria is pandemic bureaucratic and political corruption. This study shows that political and bureaucratic corruptions have grave implications for democratic stability in Nigeria. It is argued that democratic stability will be difficult to attain as long as corruption remain pandemic and unchecked.

Key words: Corruption, democracy, democratic consolidation, instability, legitimacy, violence

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria’s democratic project has been under perpetual threat since 1999 when the country returned to democratic governance especially as a result of high prevalence of corruption. Put differently, corruption is a major challenge to democratic stability in Nigeria. The political climate, to say the least has been hostile to democracy. The general scepticism has been whether the current experience will last. This cynicism is justifiable when one consider the fact that all the factors that precipitated the collapse of the First and Second Republics are currently at play. Widespread violence, electoral frauds, political assassination, politically inspired ethno-religious conflict, apathy, evitable economic woes and its attendant consequences (abject poverty, slums etc.), flagrant disregard for the rule of law, disrespect for human rights and pandemic corruption remains the key features of Nigerian political life. These manifestations of democratic instability are the symptoms and consequences of basic system pathology, majorly, political corruption. Corruption has become prevalent and has not only greatly eroded the basis of the authority of the state but also challenge the legitimacy of democracy as the best form of governance. The problem of democratic instability persists because the political system has failed to engender, maintain and sustain the belief in Nigerians that democracy is the most appropriate system for the society. This study demonstrates that corruption has robbed Nigerians, the government which they chose to represent and pursue their interests and the consequence- democratic instability is inevitable.

Defining corruption: The theoretical thinking perceiving corruption as a major factor that poses serious threat to democratic stability, sustainability and consolidation is not uncommon in the literatures (Osaghae, 1995; Johnston, 1991; Obayelu, 2007; HRW, 2007; Fjeldstad and Isakens, 2008). These theoretical stance is depicted in various works and analyses as “amoral politics”, “amoral familism” (Osaghae, 1995; Ogundiya, 2009), “prebendalism” (Joseph, 1987), “patrimonialism and nepotism”, “clientelism” (Seteolu, 2005) to mention a few. Corrupt ridden states are also captioned by scholars as “predatory”, “soft state” (Myrdal) and so on. The problem with Nigeria is that all these descriptions are suitable to analyse Nigerian situation.

Though amorphous, corruption in its popular conception is defined as the exploitation of public position, resources, and power for private gain (Nye, 1967; Dobel, 1978; Amuwo, 2005; Obayelu, 2007; Fjeldstad and Isakens, 2008; Ogundiya, 2009). For instance Dobel (1978) define corruption as “the betrayal of public trust for individual or group gain”. In a similar vein, Obayelu (2007) identifies corruption as “efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit”. It is important to note that corruption is neither system specific nor culture bound. It is ubiquitous. Therefore, corruption as a phenomenon, is a global problem, and exists in varying degrees in different countries (Agbu, 2003). Corruption is not only found in democratic and dictatorial politics, but also in feudal, capitalist and socialist economies. Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist cultures are equally bedevilled by corruption (Dike, 2005 cf Obayelu, 2007). Corrupt practices, in all its manifestations are as old as human race (Lipset and Lenz, 2000). However, the nature, form, dimension, character and the severity of corruption differs from one nation to the other. While corruption is more prevalent in the developing world, the developed world experience corruption at a minimal level. The important reason for the low level of corruption in the advanced democracies is that the control mechanisms are more
developed and effective than in the developing countries. The efficacy of the control mechanisms in the advanced democracies further accounts for the relative political and democratic stability that these countries enjoy. Before going on to examine the nexus of corruption and democratic stability, let us briefly elaborate on the concept of democratic stability and its connection to democratic consolidation.

Towards explaining democratic stability theoretical and conceptual explorations: Research on democratic stability in the developing countries, currently experiencing the “third wave”, is problematic for a number of reasons. “Political traditions are not yet developed, party systems are fragile and electoral formulas are changed, and in addition, one cannot always separate personal influence of exceptional political leaders from their institutionally capabilities” (Pugaciuaskas, 1999). Another analytical problem stems from the fact that democratic stability could be confused with regime stability. However, the term democratic stability is preferred to “regime stability” as the former carries considerable normative charge. Rather than define the essence of democratic stability, some authors have confined themselves to presenting the criteria of democratic instability: cancellation of constitutionally required democratic elections; usurpation of governmental powers- usually through fraudulent elections; unconstitutional impeachments etc. (Pugaciuaskas, 1999).

The concept of democratic stability is synonymous with legitimacy, especially if legitimacy is conceived as the belief in the moral rights of a regime to govern. Therefore, the ingredients of these moral rights that a regime enjoys are inherent in the concept of democratic stability. According to Osaghae (1995) “the premise of democratic stability is that what sustains government and ensures stability is voluntary support or consent of the citizens rather than reliance on coercion”. In the words of Diamond (1999) “it is by now a central tenet of empirical theory that stable democracy also requires a belief in the legitimacy of democracy”. These democratic ingredients of stability have been well summarized by Diamond et al. (1987 cf Osaghae, 1995) thus:

All governments rest on some kind of mixture of coercion and consent, but democracies are unique in the degree to which their stability depends on the consent of a majority of those governed. Almost as a given, theories of democracy stress that democratic stability requires a widespread belief among both elites and masses that democracy is the best form of government for their society, and hence that the democratic regime is morally entitled to rule.

In a similar vein, Mishler and Rose (2001) maintained that a defining feature of democratic regimes is that they depend for their survival and effective functioning on the public’s willing acquiescence and support. Democratic stability, therefore, presupposes “that people have, at any given time, the government which they choose and that, being rational beings, they are most likely to support a government which represents and pursues their interests” (Osaghae, 1995). A government which represents and pursue peoples’ interest must be responsive, responsible and accountable to the people. Responsiveness and accountability enhance people’s affection and support for the system. This further enhances the growth and development of democratic culture, which is a sine qua non for democratic survival. In essence, a developed democratic culture is a sine qua non for democratic stability. Here, Linz and Stephan’s (cited in Umar, 2002) illustrative phrase that stable democracy depends on average citizens accepting it as “the only game in town” is critically instructive.

Cultural theorists like Almond and Verba (1963) and Lipset (1994) for instance, clearly recognised that cultural variables, especially legitimacy, can be critical for the survival of democratic regimes once they are established. In his more recent work Lipset (1994) stated that: “Political stability in democratic systems cannot rely on force. The alternative to force is legitimacy...” (Lipset et al., 1993; Lipset, 1994). Seligson (2000) also found an inextricable connection between levels of support and tolerance and democratic stability. Seligson (2000) declared that: ‘in situations of low support and low tolerance, democracy is clearly at risk and democratic breakdown seems to be the most likely ultimate outcome’. The belief in the rightness of the political arrangement or what Lipset (1959) called legitimacy is a function of the cognitive, affective and evaluative orientations of the citizens. This is also influenced by the nature of politics, quality of governance, leadership performance, and the character and nature of the relationship among the contending elites. Regimes characterized by higher level of democratic legitimacy are more likely, according to Fails (2008), “to complete the process of democratisation”. This process has been described by Diamond (1999) as “democratic deepening”, reflecting the continuous ability of democratic institutions to improve political participation; to become more open and vigorous; and enhance accountability. The underlying assumption here is that how average citizens perceive democracy has an important impact on its stability. Based on this assumption, this study shows that political and bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria, as experienced in the past ten years has made nonsense of and threatens Nigeria’s nascent democracy.
Other writers argue that the choice of institutional model is central to democratic stability. Pugaciuakas (1999) argues that “the choice of institutional model matters- and matters, first and foremost, from the viewpoint of democratic stability”. Bernhard et al. (2001) also relate the survival of democracies to economic performance and institutional design. If this view is right one can conclude that the failure of the First and Second Nigerian Republics were caused by the wrong choice of institutional frameworks/models. Though this assertion may be plausible, it is important to note that, one major flaw of this theory is that it failed to appreciate the role of the operators. There is no perfect institutional framework- even a perfect institution in the hand of political scoundrel is nothing but a misguided missile. For example, democratic instability in Nigeria, as shall be argued later, is exacerbated not only by institutional flaws but mostly by deviations from institutional prescriptions- tested and stable models of presidentialism. While some scholars paid considerable attention to the role of culture, institutional model, and the economic well-being of a state, others emphasize the nature and character of elite, the nature of and role of ethnicity to mention a few.

Przeworski and his colleagues have shown that once democracy is stable, the level of economic development has a great deal to do with its ability to survive. The Przeworski et ál study, limits itself to macro-level economic and institutional data (Cited in Seligson 2000). Since the publication of the Lipset’s early seminal, it has been demonstrated that macro-level variables such as GNP, literacy, and regime type all play very important role in creating the necessary conditions for the emergence and survival of democracy. Huntington(1991) concludes that economic development is far more important than culture, and points to the contradictions in the argument that suggest that Confucianism and Islam present obstacles to democratisation.

The existing empirical research on democratic consolidation typically follows one of two strategies which are called “substantive” and “prospective” (Svolik, 2007). According to Svolik (2007), “The substantive approach focuses on a set of ideal outcomes that we should be observed in a mature democracy and then evaluates to what extent a polity approaches them”. Such ideal outcomes frequently concern the functioning of political institutions (Grzyma la-Busse, 2007); respect for the democratic “rules of the game” (Diamond, 1999; Levitsky and Way, 2002 cf Svolik, 2007); as well as popular and elite attitudes towards democracy (Almond and Verba, 1963; Guillermo and Schmitter, 1986; Putnam, 1993; Bermeo, 2003; Cleary and Stokes, 2006; Bernhard and Karakoc, 2007). The second, prospective approach associates consolidation with the durability of democracy. According to Schedler (1998, 95 cf Svolik, 2007), for instance, “consolidating democracy means reducing the probability of its breakdown to the point where [we] can feel reasonably confident that democracy will persist”. Therefore, democratic consolidation is about regime maintenance and about regarding the key political institutions as the only legitimate framework for political contestation and adherence to the democratic rules of the game. Consolidation, according to Diamond “is the process of achieving broad (and) deep legitimization such that all significant political actors, at both elite and mass level believe that the democratic system is better for their society than any other realistic alternative they can imagine”. Schedler (1998) in a related argument, describes democratic consolidation as the challenge of making new democracies secure, of extending their life expectancy... of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression, of building dams against the eventual reverse waves”. Suffice to say that this cannot be achieved except stability is attained.

The tiny gap between stability and consolidation is that stability begets consolidation. Indeed democracy must be stable for it to be consolidated. By implication democracy must make sense to the people for it to enjoy considerable support required for its consolidation. In this work, democratic stability is seen as a step toward democratic consolidation. Democratic consolidation is as earlier discussed is also a function of so many factors, including enhanced economic development, developed democratic culture, stable party system etc.

Corruption and democratic instability in Nigeria 1999-2009: Events in Nigeria since 1999 have shown that the tidal waves of reversal have been contending with Nigeria’s democratic project. Consequently, democracy has remained grossly unstable and the future seems to be very bleak because of rampant systemic bureaucratic and political corruption. Corruption has reached a high crescendo such that an average Nigerian now possibly associates democracy with corruption. The consequences of political corruption are patently manifest: cyclical crisis of legitimacy, fragile party structure, institutional decay, chronic economic problem and underdevelopment and, above all, general democratic volatility. Then, what are the effects of corruption on democratic stability? This shall be discussed paying attention to the effects of corruption on the economy and the socio-psychological and political behaviour of both the politicians and the electorates. Let us briefly examine some of these linkages.

Corruption, economic development and democratic stability: The effects of corruption on a nation’s economy are damaging. Indeed a nation inundated with corruption cannot be viable economically neither can the system generate enough support/affection required for the
survival of democratic system. This is the situation in Nigeria where corruption has become part and parcel of the political culture. Corruption has indeed robbed Nigerians the benefit of economic development because scarce available resources that should have been deployed to execute developmental projects have gone into private foreign accounts. For instance in 2006, the head of Nigeria’s Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Nuhu Ribadu, estimated that Nigeria lost some US$380 billion to corruption between independence in 1960 and the end of military rule in 1999 (BBC, 2007). According to Tony Blair (2005 cf Ogundiya, 2008), the former Prime Minister of Britain, this amount is equivalent to all the western aid given to Africa in almost four decades and also equivalent to 300 years of British aid for the continent. It is also said to be six times the American aid given to post-war Europe under the Marshall plan. Nigeria’s corruption epidemic has continued since then. Some western diplomats estimated that Nigeria lost a minimum average of $4 billion to $8 billion per year to corruption over the eight years of the Obasanjo administration (HRW, 2007). That figure would equal between 4.25% and 9.5% of Nigeria’s total GDP in 2006. To put those numbers in perspective, a loss of 9.5% of the United States’ GDP to corruption in 2006 would have translated into $1.25 trillion in stolen funds or $222 billion (GBP 108.6 billion) in the case of the United Kingdom’s economy (HRW, 2007). Though these figures may not be very reliable, it is incontestable that corruption has assumed a ludicrous dimension in Nigeria. Nigerian situation aptly fit into what Myrdal (cf Amuwo, 2005) described as the “folklore of corruption”. Expectedly, this has had a debilitating impact on the nation’s socio-economic and political development. Significantly, the levels of economic development and democratic stability have been found to be mutually supporting. The bulk of liberal democratic theory establishes a close relationship between the economies, refers to as development, and a stable democratic rule (Lipset et al., 1993; Ake, 2001). However, the link between democracy and economic prosperity is not as simple as it has been taken to be, because the democratic process and the fortunes of the economy have a cybernetic feedback interaction. Democracy facilitates economic development, while economic backwardness and decline impedes democratization. The contention here is that the level of corruption in Nigeria has adversely affected the performance of economy in that the resources which would have been deployed to facilitate development have found their ways into private pockets and individual accounts in foreign countries. This is indeed the reason for high level of poverty, insecurity, widespread diseases, and high unemployment rate. All these provide unsuitable ground for democracy to thrive. Observing the trends in the development of the Nigerian democratic project, the Human Right Watch (2007) comments:

Despite record-setting, government revenues in recent years, corruption and mismanagement remain a major cause of Nigeria’s failure to make meaningful progress in improving the lot of ordinary Nigerians. These financial factors are closely entwined with the rampant political violence in Nigeria. Public revenues are not only stolen and misused, but often pay for the services and weapons behind the political violence. Because violence and corruption make political competition a very expensive endeavour in Nigeria, many politicians are far more accountable to powerful and violent political godfathers who sponsor them than they are to their constituents.

Therefore, in the face of economic hardship, believed to have been propelled by widespread corruption, it is an herculean task to convince an average Nigerian to continue to make unending sacrifices and swallow without a limit, the bitter economic pills which is not a natural consequence but an inevitable effect of a corrupt system. Therefore, to say that support for democracy is weakly strong in Nigeria is not an overstatement. Weakly strong is deliberately used to describe a situation whereby Nigerians though prefer civilian to military rule, have a cold affection for democracy. This is indeed a problematic situation, created by the glaring and prevalent corruption that has pervaded Nigeria’s democracy in the past ten years.

Corruption, political violence and democratic stability:
Political violence is the bane of democratic stability in Nigeria and its major cause is the over-permissiveness of corruption by the Nigerian state. In Nigeria, political power guarantees unlimited and uncontrolled access to the resources of the state and society that are then appropriated for personal and parochial use and advantages. Nigerian brand of civilian politicking is therefore no more than a prebendal enterprise engaged in largely for the crude appropriation of national resources (Joseph, 1987; Fawole, 2005; Ibeau, 2007). Consequently, contestants deploy terror tactics and violence to intimidate out or eliminate the opponents in what Ibeau (2007) conceived as ‘machine politics”. Therefore, there is a direct relationship between corruption and political violence-many public officials use stolen public revenues to pay for political violence in support of their ambitions (HRW, 2007). Since 1999 when the country returned to democracy, it is estimated that more than ten thousand lives have been lost in politically motivated violence and properties worth
billions of nairas have been destroyed. There is little doubt that there is an inextricable nexus between corruption and the crises in the Nigerian state. Nigeria provides a fertile ground for political corruption. Political corruption in a democratic context refers to the problem of agency between citizen and elected official, and the way it is affected by institutions that define the electoral process, such as division of powers between different branches of and levels of government, the role of the legal system and civil society in influencing public policy and its implementation. In short, it deals with the policy formulation process and high level of corruption among politicians. Political corruption is evident when governmental power is abused for illegitimate private, group, or sectional advantage. This is the trading of influence and authority by political leaders and may extend to granting favours, irregularities in campaign financing and electoral fraud. It is an effort to secure wealth for private benefit at public expense (Lipset and Lenz, 2000). Forms of political corruption includes, rigging, vote buying, vote selling, cancellation of votes, ballot stuffing, manipulation of electoral registers, inflation of electoral votes and the employment of political offices for personal advantage at the expense of the public interest.

It is important to point out that the level of political corruption has affected the cognitive perception of Nigerians, first about the ability of the state to organise a free and fair electoral contest; and second, perception that political appointments are one sure way to wealth and elevation of social status; and third, perception that the political office holders cannot be responsive and accountable to the citizens. The impact of this on democratic stability is clear. Electoral contest has become a do or die affair, turning Nigeria’s political milieu to a Hobbesian state of nature- war of all against all-characterised by what Ibeanu (2007) aptly described as the “primitive accumulation of votes” or “machine politics”. This, according to Ibeanu (2007) is to sustain the belief that a legitimate way of securing political office is to steal the peoples’ mandate. This has produced several consequences with serious implication for democratic stability: Contract killings, political assassination, electoral violence resulting in the general destruction of lives and properties. Moreover, on the part of the Nigerian voters and the politicians, the consequences are very apparent. Ibeanu (2007) trenchantly summarised the consequences:

On their part Nigerians voters do not attach great promissory, content or psychological values to their votes. The vote is grossly devalued and the mandates claimed by politicians are effectively dubious... In term of the content value of their votes, Nigerian voters and politicians alike know that votes are unequal and that the actions of corrupt electoral official, party leaders, security agents and the presidency do count more in determining electoral outcomes than votes... the bulk of Nigerian voters have no illusions about the importance of their votes and there is no psychological satisfaction in voting because they know that either the votes will not be counted or the votes will not count.

Consequently, as the philosophical basis and fundamental ethos of democracy are been swept under the carpet, the Nigerian electorate expectedly lost faith not only in the electoral process, but fundamentally on the government which a fraudulent process produced. Such fraudulent electoral process with the benefit of hindsight has produced irresponsible and unaccountable governance in Nigeria. Impliedly, the legitimacy of democracy as the best form of governance has been seriously corroded.

More distressing to democratic stability is the godfatherism in Nigerian politics. One of the major damaging consequences of corruption in Nigeria in the recent time is the emergence of political “kingmakers” and gladiators commonly known as the political godfathers. According to Human Right Watch (2007):

Godfatherism is both a symptom and a cause of the violence and corruption that together permeate the political process in Nigeria. Public officials who owe their position to the efforts of a political godfather incur a debt that they are expected to repay without end throughout their tenure in office. Godfathers are only relevant because politicians are able to deploy violence and corruption with impunity to compete for office in contests that often effectively, and sometimes actually, exclude Nigeria’s voters’ altogether. But their activities also help to reinforce the central role of violence and corruption in politics by making it even more difficult to win elected office without resorting to the illegal tactics they represent.

Political corruption and the politics of godfatherism and the attendant political violence pose more danger to democracy than any other factor. The contention here is that, the state of contemporary electoral competition in Nigeria is far from making democracy meaningful, sensible and far from been durable.

**Corruption, legitimacy and democratic stability:**
Legitimacy is the moral rights of a government to be obeyed. It is also seen as the belief by the majority of citizens that the regime, defined as the constitutional order is the most appropriate one for the society (Lipset, 1959). With legitimacy the business of governance is made
simple. Democracy provides the ingredients through which the moral basis of authority is justified. Therefore, the essence of democracy is to lay a solid moral foundation for the authority of the state, the incumbent political head and other state institutions. Democracy therefore, not only prescribes how political power should be acquired but also what to do with it and how it must be exercised (Ogundiya, 2008). One of the hallowed procedures of democracy is the electoral contest to determine who will be allowed to hold public offices at all levels (Fawole, 2005). An important ingredient of this procedure, as Diamond (Cited in Fawole, 2005) would have us believe, is the strict adherence to the rules of the electoral system. Therefore, when power is acquired and exercised contrary to democratic prescriptions and norms, the moral basis of authority becomes questionable and unjustifiable. This is the situation in Nigeria since 1999 when the country returned to democratic governance because fairness and objectivity, which are irreducible prerequisites for democratic stability, have been thrown overboard. Thus, elections have failed to produce a legitimate and acceptable government in Nigeria. As discussed earlier this has frustrated democratic stability in the country.

The 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections were adjudged to be worse than the previous general elections. A fraudulent election can produce nothing except a fraudulent government, unacceptable to the people. Expectedly, the advent of civilian rule in Nigeria in 1999 after a decade and half of military rule has not automatically translated into democratic governance, in a strict sense. Rather than put the blame on the prolonged military rule and the authoritarian imprints it left on the psyche of Nigerians, the fault should be properly placed at the corridor of the kleptomaniac political and bureaucratic elites (Ogundiya, 2009). Indeed, rather than authoritarian imprints (Fawole, 2005), the insatiable taste for stealing among the political elites has dulled the democratic sensibilities of Nigerians, thereby posing a serious threat to democratic stability.

Corruption, political party (ies) and democratic instability: Political parties are central to democratic stability. It is one of the indispensable institutions of democracy. It is perhaps incontrovertible to argue that political parties constitute one of the major clog in the wheel of democratisation and democratic stability in Nigeria since the country re-democratised in 1999. Indeed a bulk of literatures on Nigerian government and politics rightly associated the demise of the First and Second Republics to the Party system (Adamolekun, 1985; Agbaje, 1990, 1996; Suberu, 1990; Fawole, 2005; Ogundiya and Baba, 2007). However, various authors differ in terms of emphasis. Some writers lay emphasis on the nature of the party system, party formation, composition (ethnic and religious) and geographical spread, others stressed the conflictual interparty and intra-party relationships. One major development in the recent years is that political parties in Nigeria have become a liability to democratic stability instead of asset. Party procedures for the appointment of candidates are usually scuttled and non-transparent, as political godfathers have taken over the affairs of the parties. Corrupt political financing has adversely affected democracy in two fundamental ways. First, it has generated serious intra-party feuds between and among the followers and loyalists of the competing political godfathers resulting in political assassinations and contract killings. Intra party feuds since 1999 have assumed alarming and ludicrous dimension. Between 1999 and 2009 over 100 party stalwarts and thousands of party supporters have been assassinated including: Odunayo Olagbaju (AC party stalwarts in Osun state), Marshal Harry, Dikibo, Funso Williams (PDP Gubernatorial aspirant in Lagos state), Dr. Ayodeji Daramola (PDP stalwarts and Gubernatorial aspirant in Ekiti state) among others. Secondly, corrupt political financing has made ruling political parties at all level of governance reluctant to pass strict laws on political party financing, since some of the funds on which they rely for their survival are obtained from dubious sources and corrupt practices.

This further explains the weak support for anticorruption posture of the Federal government by the political parties. In a study in Kenya, Akivaga (2001) found that the ineffectiveness of the political parties in the crusade against corruption can be attributed to: first, lack of commitment to a national agenda even when it is formulated; second, the pursuit of short term personal interest as opposed to the long term interest of the nation; third, obsession with ethnic considerations as the basis of politics; fourth, lack of leadership with vision, that is , an absence of leaders whose word is their bond, who possess principles and will, and who put integrity and character above wealth. While this is true in the case of Nigeria, it needs be reiterated that political parties in Nigeria are corruptly constituted and as well managed by corrupt past military, bureaucratic and political class. In such situation, political parties, as a democratic institution cannot afford to be an agent of democratic stability but rather an agent of decay.

Corruption, the legislature and democratic breakdown: Nigeria presents a typical case of failed democracy in Africa due largely to corruption (Madaugwu, 1996). Another institution of democracy that has been ravaged by corruption is the legislatures (both at the state and the Federal levels). Indeed Ogbam Ogban Iyam’s trenchant hypothetical statements are to a large
extent valid from the experience of Nigeria since the return of the country to civilian rule in 1999. Ogban-Iyam (1996) propositions which are considered relevant for the understanding of the defective functionalities of the legislatures to democratic stability are:

- When the few control the governance of a polity and have the preponderance of force to continue to maintain such control, the National Assembly that emerges from the dictation of such a group is likely to be more corrupt and subversive of democracy and democratisation than the one that emerges from the dictates of the popular forces.
- A National Assembly which is recruited and constituted through corrupt and anti-democratic means tends to be corrupt.
- A corruptly recruited National Assembly tends to subvert democracy, and hinders democratisation.
- A citizenry that is essentially corrupt tends to have and tolerate a corrupt National Assembly.

With the benefit of observation of the practices and legislative activities from 1999 to date one can conclude, without fear of contradiction that first, the few powerful individuals popularly known as godfathers have forced members of the various houses of assemblies on Nigerians through dubious and fraudulent electoral process. Hence, the Legislatures existing since 1999 does not have its source in the popular will. Therefore, members of National and State Houses of Assemblies were recruited through corrupt and antidemocratic means. Third, the leaders of the National and State Houses of Assemblies have, as various revelations have shown, embarked on stealing spree instead of legislating for good governance and development of the country. Fourth, National and State Houses of Assemblies are undoubtedly products of a corrupt society. For example, questions bordering on corruption have created serious instability in the upper and lower legislative Houses. From 1999 when the country returned to electoral democracy, the leadership in the Senate and the House of Representative have not been stable. Chief Evans Enwerem, Chuba Okadigbo and Adolphos Nwabara were impeached on account of mismanagement and corrupt enrichment. For instance, Senator Idris Kuta led panel that investigated the allegation of corruption against Senator Chuba Okadigbo found out among others that he was involved in the inflation of the street light project to the tune of 173 million naira; authorized the payment of 37.2 million naira to furnish the Senate president’s residence, an amount above the approved 25 million; installed and commissioned a 100 KVA generating set at the Senate President’s residence at an inflated price of 15 million naira. Adolphus Wabara, also an impeached Senate President was also guilty of receiving bribe of 55 million naira from Professor Osuji (the former Education Minister) to inflate the budgetary allocation to education ministry. Senator Chimaroke Nnamani also faced about 124 count charges of fraud, conspiracy, concealment and money laundering totaling about 5.4 billion naira (Vanguard newspaper Saturday February 16, 2008). Madam Patricia Eteh, the first female Speaker of the House of Representatives, resigned following her indictment over the misappropriation of public funds in multiple contracts of N628m (US$5 million) for the renovation of her official residence and the purchase of 12 official cars. Suffice to say that many legislators bought their ways into the legislative house. Corruption has also had debilitating impacts on the rule of law, human rights and other supportive ingredients of democracy. The implication for democratic stability is apparently detrimental.

**CONCLUSION**

Democracy cannot be predicated on a fragile and unstable political base. Corruption, the paper argues has been responsible for the fragility and volatility of democracy in Nigeria. Corruption has greatly eroded the fundamental values of democracy and the essential principle that government should be representative and accountable to the citizens. Invariably, the Nigerian political leaders as it is presently constituted lack the moral fibres to champion the cause of the Nigerian society. When political leaders are perceived to be pursuing their personal interests excessively, citizens become disenchanted, questioning the legitimacy of leaders and the state, and even the legitimacy of the process and system that produced them. This is what constitutes democratic instability. Democratic stability simply presupposes “that a people have, at any given time, the government which they choose and that, being rational beings, they are most likely to support a government which represents and pursues their interests. Though this is not to suggest that corruption explains everything- ethnicity, religious bigotry, recycling nature of the political elites, bad governance, fragile party structure, deteriorating economy etc- are other variables that account for democratic instability in Nigeria. Importantly, all the above factors are both symptoms and consequences of political corruption. Therefore, to ensure stable democracy anticorruption policies devoid of mere spechifying must be put in place.

**REFERENCES**


