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Legislative Corruption and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The dawns of 20th and 21st centuries have brought considerable acceptance of democratic rule globally more than any other century. To many, democracy is seen as a reasonable yardstick to gauge citizens' involvement in political activities and events within the polity. In modern society worldwide, democracy is regarded as a symbol of social civilization and progress. No wonder in recent times, citizens in countries in North Africa and in the Middle-East who had lived under oppressive dictatorships for decades are rising up to stake up their claim to democracy. However, in Nigeria in the past one decade, corruption in its various forms and contexts has emerged as one of the most widespread problem affecting the country's nascent democracy and consequently stifles the much excitement that heralded the rebirth of democracy in Nigeria's fourth republic. In the light of the foregoing, this study discusses extent of legislative corruption in Nigeria and its implications on broader good governance agenda. Set within the framework of democratic consolidation, the study argues that unabated legislative corruption may weaken the structure necessary for democratic consolidation in the country and consequently thwarts democracy and repress people.

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Key words: *Democracy, Legislatures, Corruption, Democratic consolidation, Democratic reversal.*

Introduction

Corruption is a complex social, political and economic phenomenon that affects all countries of the world. This despicable vice permeates all strata of human endeavours and it has been ongoing intensely in many parts of the world literally for centuries. A raft of recent research on causes and effects of corruption indicates that corruption and corrupt practices worldwide are inconceivably large and increasing, placing enormous burdens on growth and development of every country where this act is prevalent. Indeed, the phenomenon of corruption and its horrendous implications is widely known globally and has attracted considerable scholarly attention. To all and sundry, corruption is not a new issue, act or concept; indeed, the phenomenon and what it stands for is as old as the world. It is a problem of the ancient and contemporary worlds. In fact, recorded history has it that sizeable number of people who lived in ancient societies such as Egypt; Greece and Rome were enshrouded in corrupt practices ((Lipset and Lenz, 2000).

Corruption is a complex phenomenon with intriguing challenge to explain its many sides. The complexity of corruption is underscored by different ideas of what constitutes an adequate description of the phenomenon. Another complexity of corruption emanates from the difficulty inherent in defining and measuring the vice despite its ubiquity and the rate at which it pervades all sectors of human enterprise (Faloore, 2010).

A perusal of literature in social and management sciences reveals that the term corruption is applied to the abuse power or trust for narrow self interests. Corruption is the diversion of the natural cause of events, with a view to conferring undue advantage on an individual or a group of individuals. Corruption is defined by the World Bank (1997, 17) and Transparency International as "abuse of public power for private benefits". It is an action or inaction which gives advantages or bestows undue favour on a person that he is not legally or morally entitled to. Better still, corruption is regarded as an abuse of all offices of trust for private gains whether in public or private sector. It is any form of illegal self-enrichment or the conferment of same on any individual to the detriment of the society (Mauro, 2002).

More often, corruption is used as a generic term by many commentators to mean concepts such as bribery, campaign finance abuse, clientelism, cronyism, fraud, embezzlement, extortion, graft, kickbacks, machine politics, misappropriation, misconduct, nepotism, patronage, pork, rent-seeking, scandal, side payments, theft and venality by people that are not directly

involved in politics or occupying any public office. Other social surveyors have described the term narrowly to mean an act by a public official or their cronies that violates legal or social norms for private or particularistic gain (Johnston, 1994; Manzetti and Charles Blake, 1996).

The issue of Corruption and the Nigerian Case

The issue and act of corruption is not alien in Nigeria and to Nigerians. However, the emergence of official corrupt practices in the country is traced to the time of establishment of modern structures of public administration in the country by the British Colonial Administration (Steven, 2004). Ample evidence exists to establish that corruption occurs in all spheres of human endeavours in the country. Hence, the Transparency International Annual Corruption Perception Index that many times consistently rated Nigeria as one of the most corrupt, and at another time the most corrupt nation in the world. As accentuated above, corruption cuts across class, religion, sex, and creed. The vice is not limited to the public sector alone; findings from social survey have shown that the private sector is not immune from practices associated with corruption. As a matter of fact, issue of corruption has become a growing concern for all and it is not unconnected with prevailing social, political, economic and historical factors in the society (Mbeki 1999 and Mogae 1999; Dike 2001; Akanbi 2004; Ogbonna 2004).

In Nigeria, corruption has been acknowledged in many fronts as the single most important factor reversing democratic gains and development (ICPC, 2006). The vice is not also seen in the country as a threat to democracy but also perceive to undermined economic development, violate social justice, and destroy trust in state institutions.

The evil called corruption attracts myriad problems and its effects are manifold. Indeed, the cost of corruption in the country is hard to calculate, but the best estimates as evident in the works of social surveyors indicate that corruption undermines democratic institutions, slows economic development and more importantly contributes to governmental instability (Ayobolu, 2006).

Another poisonous effect of corruption is its' overwhelming attacks on the foundation of democratic institutions by distorting electoral processes, perverting the rule of law and creating bureaucratic quagmires that only exist for the purpose of soliciting of bribes. Economic development is stunted because foreign direct investment is discouraged and small businesses within the country often find it impossible to overcome the "start-up costs" required because of corruption. Also in Nigeria, broad spectrum of findings from social research has evidently shown colossal negative impact of corruption on the country's economy in the form of inefficiency, lack of culture of accountability, weak government structures; excessive concentration of power in the various arms of government and lack of transparency, shameless act of stealing of public funds and properties, wasteful mismanagement of national resources and public assets is closely associated with failure on the part of politics and politicians (U.N. 1990; Ndiulor 1999; Sachs, 2007).

As established above, official corruption in Nigeria is not a novel practice. A considerable amount of bribery, nepotism and the use of political office for personal enrichment existed in late colonial Nigeria. In fact, various allegations of maladministration and dishonesty were the reasons the then Colonial Government set up a commission headed by Bernard Storey to investigate the activities of Lagos Town Council. The ensuing report contained the first extended public discussion of widespread corrupt administrative practices in Nigeria. The outcome of the report culminated into the removal of the then Lagos town councilors from office and the resultant installation of a caretaker administration by the western regime (Tignor, 1993).

In the same vein, investigation conducted in Southern, Eastern and Northern parts of the country revealed that most parts of these aforementioned regions were affected by allegations of systematic corruption and dishonesty. For example, Tignor claimed that, the inquiries conducted by British observers (O.P. Gunning for the eastern part and Nicholson commission for the western part of the country) referred to the actions of the then premier, Dr. Azikwe as being far from sort of the expectations of honest and reasonable people, while Nicholson commission indicted National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (N.C.N.C.) politician, and the leader of the Ibadan District Council Adegoke Adelabu, of corruption. This resulted into Adelabu's resignation and was later banned from serving in ministerial capacities. Although, there were no British appointed commissions of inquiry or any published report indicting individual politicians in the Northern part of the country, nevertheless Abubakar Balewa, who later became Nigeria's first Prime Minister, in 1950 publicly condemned bribery and corruption in the region.

For many in Nigeria, corruption is best regarded as ill-wind which blows ordinary citizens no good; it is always trailed by throes of destruction. In Nigeria, the phenomenon to a great extent has contributed significantly to low success (both politically and economically) as recorded in the First Republic (1960 - 1966) and the Second Republic (1979 - 1983). Also, the military highlighted unprecedented cases of corruption that characterized the democratic dispensations as the justification for overthrowing the democratically elected government. Nonetheless, in 1999, the military rulers who had cited corruption as the major reason the democratically elected governments were sacked from office were also accused and found guilty of corruption (Tignor, 1993). A typical example of corruption during the early military era in Nigeria was that of Yakubu Gowon administration, a regime where ten out of the twelve military administrators were all indicted of corruption.

Corruption in Nigeria is illegal though it is rife among Nigerians especially among the political class. There exist relevant constitutional provisions for the three arms of the government to help nip corruption in the bud through the proper discharge of their responsibilities and functions in the country. But of all these, the role of the legislature appears all encompassing and more important (Wolffowitz, 2006). To this end, the focus of this paper is to examine the constitutional roles of legislative arm of the government in Nigeria in curbing corruption, the extent to which this organ of the government has played these roles, and how well members of legislative arm have fared in inhibiting corruption; an act which its debilitating effects on democratic rule know no bounds.

The National Assembly and the Constitutional Mechanisms to tackle Corruption

In short, almost every government in Nigeria since 1960 has promised to raise ethical standards and restore accountability and transparency in governance. But against this stance, massive looting of the nation's wealth and resources by high ranking state officials has remained a permanent feature of the country's political life.

To help combat corruption and its damaging consequences in both formal and informal sectors in Nigeria, several successive governments, beginning from the colonial era till the Nigerian fourth republic (a republic that came to being on May 29, 1999 as a result of swearing in of elected President Olusegun Obasanjo) adopted myriad governmental policies and legal instruments. Chief among these anti-corruption policies, decrees and legislations are: the Criminal Code, Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous provision) Decree in 1966, Code of Conduct Bureau, the Recovery of Public Property Act of 1984 and Economic and Financial Crimes commission and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (the EFCC and the ICPC). Without doubt, the contributions of legislatures (members of national assembly and their counterparts in various states of the federation in Nigeria) to the making of the aforementioned legislations and legal instruments in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized.

It is also instructive to know that the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria vested on the National Assembly the legislative power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Federation or any part thereof with respect to any matter included in the Exclusive Legislative List and to make laws with respect to any matter in the Concurrent Legislative List and with respect to any other matter to which it is empowered to make laws in accordance with the provisions of the constitution (See section 4(2) and (3) of the 1999 Constitution). In short, the functions of legislators under the 1999 constitution are stated as follows: (i) making of law and formulation of policies, (ii) oversight functions, (iii) investigative functions, (iv) constituency responsibilities role and (v) watchdog role over public funds. As part of the process of making Laws, each House of the National Assembly is given the power to summon before it and question any minister about the conduct of his ministry, particularly when the affairs of that ministry are under consideration. The power is given to the National Assembly in subsection (2) of section 67 which provides that:

"A minister of the Government of the Federation shall attend either House of the National Assembly if invited to explain to the House the conduct of his Ministry, and in particular when the affairs of that Ministry are under discussion".

A similar power is given to a State House of Assembly in subsection (2) of section 108 with respect to state commissioners.

In addition to law-making, the upper chamber of the National Assembly is given a confirmatory role in certain appointments made by the President, such as those of the Chief Justice of Nigeria and other senior judicial officers, ministers, ambassadors, chairmen and members of certain executive bodies created for the Federation in section 153, requiring confirmation in section 154, of the Constitution. A declaration of war by Nigeria or of an emergency, whether in one State or in the Federation as a whole, also requires confirmation by the Senate.

In a nutshell, sections 80 and 81 of the 1999 Constitution empowers members of legislative arm of the government the duty to protect public fund and other resources that accrue into the coffers of the government; thereby making this arm of the government the controller of national treasury in Nigeria. Also, members of the National Assembly have been constitutionally empowered to monitor appropriation of funds for public expenditures and also to see to judicious utilization of these funds.

In addition to the above, the 1999 constitution empowers the Legislative Arm of the Government (National Assembly members) to check the excesses of executive arm of the government and make it more accountable to the people. The foregoing constitutional provisional powers of the Legislative Arm of the Government in Nigeria as stipulated in the 1999 constitution has shown that the National Assembly, more than any other arm of the government is vested with the powers of upholding the highest standard of ethics, also to be transparent, accountable, efficient and under whatever condition lead by example. Without doubt and in principle, these powers vested on the legislative arm of the government as stipulated in the constitution have ultimately turned this arm of the government to a necessary and much needed instrument for exposing and preventing corruption in the country by enacting legislation that would tackle corruption and thereby enthrone stable democratic rule in the country.

Nigerian Legislators and Corrupt Practices

But unfortunately in Nigeria, events and happenings in recent times (especially in the third and fourth republics) have shown that members of national assembly especially the leadership have not only on many occasions desecrated the oaths of allegiance taken as far as preventing and exposing corrupt practices and officials are concerned; but have also been alleged and enmeshed in large scale corruption in their efforts to discharge their responsibilities as members of National Assembly. Despite the fact that the constitution of the country especially that of 1999 has unequivocally made legislative arm of the government a pivotal body among other arms of the government as far as exposing and controlling of corruption is concerned, yet reasonable number of members of national legislative body has been caught in the intricate web of corruption. The ensuing lack of proven integrity of some members of national assembly (most especially among the leadership) has made them contravened the same offences and crimes which they legislated against.

In not too distant past, there emerged an upsurge of involvement of key members of national assembly members in Nigeria in large scale corrupt practices. Particularly, since the inception of the fourth republic in 1999, the National Assembly more than ever before in the country has faced various allegations of corruption both moral and financial. Several unfolding corrupt allegations and indictments against the leadership of the national legislative body from 1999 to 2012 have to a large extent discredited whatever gains or goodness this arm of government have made in the discharge of its duties. For instance in 1999 during the commencement of fourth republic; a republic that signaled the end of long rule of the military, Salisu Buhari, the Speaker of House of Representatives was forced to resign and was later arraigned because he was indicted for falsification of academic qualifications. According to 'The News Magazine of' June 6, 1999, Alhaji Salisu Ibrahim did not only falsify his academic records but also doctored his age (claimed he was 30 years of age even though he was not up to 30) in order to qualify as a member of lower house. Like Salisu Ibrahim, Senate President, Evans Enwerem was also indicted of falsification of age, names and academic qualifications and these acts translated to his forced resignation.

Also in the year 2000, notable members of national assembly among whom are impeached Senate President Pius Chuba Okadigbo and the Deputy Senate President Haruna Abubakar respectively were chiefs, awarded contract to cronies at inflated price and also embezzled a phenomenal sum which they claimed was spent on Christmas and Sallah gifts. In 2003, Malam Nasir el-Rufai, former Federal Capital Territory Minister, caused a stir, when he revealed that some senators demanded N54 million to clear him for a ministerial position. He thus confirmed the suspicion in some quarters that lawmakers are in the habit of demanding money to ensure less gruelling screening for ministerial nominees (Weekly Trust, December 6, 2003). In year 2004, perturbing news that rent the air was the case of Maurice Ibekwe, a member of House of Representatives who had in 1993 defrauded a German businessman of \$350000 and 5000 Dutch Marks.

Another case that had devastating effect on the leadership of senate was that of Adolphus Wabara, President of Senate in 2005. Wabara was accused of conniving with committee chairmen of Senate and House of Representatives on education to collect bribe amounting to \$458333 from representatives of education ministry. In line with a common saying that **"what a man can do, a woman can do better"** Patricia Etteh, Speaker of House of Representatives was forced to resign in 2007 like Wabara because of the role she played in the award of contract at inflated price of \$233,333. Swelling the rank of corrupt law makers in the country, Iyabo Obasanjo sometimes in 2008 was arrested and arraigned for collection of \$83,333 as the share of a senate committee she headed from unspent budget of 2007. In the same year, she was also accused of collecting contract worth N3.5 billion for power generation in conjunction with an Austrian firm but which she failed to execute after collecting some certain amount of money. In 2010, Central Bank Governor, Lamido Sanusi alleged that National Assembly members routinely demand money from Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

As the lower chamber of the Nigerian National Assembly was just digging itself out of the chasm of sleaze dug by previous Speaker Patricia Etteh, the case of the erstwhile Speaker of House of Representatives Honourable Dimeji Bankole hits the news stand as another Speaker that soiled his hands with corruption by over-invoicing the bill for the purchase of vehicles for oversight functions of members of House of Representatives at the rate of N2.4 billion. Bankole was later arraigned with his deputy after the expiration of their tenure as Speaker and Deputy Speaker respectively. He was also accused by the Economic and Financial Crime commission of misappropriating 9 billion naira (\$60 million), and taking a 10 billion naira personal bank loan using parliament's account as collateral (Nigerian Punch, January 24, February 1 & 21, 2012).

Also recently, a scandal in the House of Representatives involving Herman Hembe, Chairman, House Committee on Capital Market and the Director-General of the Securities and Exchange Commission, SEC, Ms. Arunma Oteh has brought to open various illicit motives behind National Assembly's multiple probe panels. Revelations from various previous legislative probes and public hearings organized by different committees have shown that probes are nothing but random plots for corrupt enrichment and desire for pecuniary gain. Little wonder, why none of the countless probes undertaken by the lawmakers are yet to yield any result (The NEWS Magazine of 26 March, 2012).

Hardly had the dust raised over the case of Herman Hembe settled when the lid was blown open over another case of legislative corruption involving Farouk Lawal and Boniface Emenalo both Chairman and Clerk of the House of Representatives Ad Hoc Committee on probe panel on fuel subsidy mismanagement by security agents. The duo accepted

\$600,000 from billionaire businessman, Femi Otedola to compromise the work of the committee (The Nation, Sunday 10th, 2012; Punch 12 June, 2012).

In line with the words of Lord Acton "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," many assembly members in Nigeria have turned the legislative assembly to hubs of corruption. The consistent involvement of assembly men and women in the country in various acts of fraud and mismanagement is a pointer to the fact that many elected assembly men and women in Nigeria are yet to see themselves as representatives of the people.

Speaking against the unbridled spate of corruption among legislators in Nigeria; Nobel laureate, Prof. 'Wole Soyinka in the Nigerian Punch Newspaper of January 24, 2012, described the legislative arm of government as the apex of corruption. Soyinka unequivocally refereed to the legislative arm of the government (both national and states assemblies) in Nigeria as the most corrupt of the three arms of the government. Corroborating this, former President Obasanjo in the Punch Newspaper of May 23, 2012, also described the majority of lawmakers as rogues and armed robbers who lack the necessary integrity that is needed for systems and institutions to be strong. He queried the sort of laws that would emanate from such lawmakers whose in his opinion are more corrupt than Nigerian police.

Legislators in the state assemblies are not immune against corruption. Cases of corrupt acts of state legislators are rife in both electronic and print media; although the reported cases are not as rampant as that of national assembly. Cases of legislative corruption are evident in the manner some state assembly speakers were removed illegally by minority. In year 2010, Tunji Samson Egbetokun, a speaker in Ogun state was impeached and Yomi Coker was appointed as the new speaker by 9 out of 24 members (originally they were 26 but 2 were on suspension). More recently in Kogi state, Mr. Bello Abdullahi, the speaker and other principal officials were removed by 12 members out of 25 in clear breach of Section 92(2) of the 1999 constitution. In both cases, a minority number of members sat and impeached the leadership of the assemblies with the support of the state executive (The Nation Newspaper, October, 27th, 2012).

Similarly, legislator corruption came to fore in the case of impeachment of former Bayelsa Governor, Chief Diepreye Alamieyeseigha when members of state assembly were manipulated by Chairman of a anti-graft commission to impeach the governor and the case of corruption against the lawmakers was discontinued in court after the impeachment.

In the light of the above, it is assumed that one would not be guilty of over-exaggerating if the extent and magnitude of legislative corruption in the country is ranked on the same plane with legislative corruption which led to the dissolution of the Long Parliament in 1653 as depicted in the speech of Oliver Cromwell to the House of Commons.

"It is high time for me to put an end to your sitting in this place, which you have dishonored by your contempt of all your virtue, and defiled by your practice of every vice; ye are a factious crew, and enemies to all good government; ye are a pack of mercenary wretches, and would like Esau sell your country for a mess of pottage, and like Judas betray your God for a few pieces of money. Is there a single virtue now remaining amongst you? Is there one vice you do not possess? Ye have no more religion than my horse; gold is your God; which of you have not barter'd your conscience for bribes? Is there a man amongst you that has the least care for the good of the Commonwealth? Ye sordid prostitutes have you not defil'd this sacred place, and turn'd the Lord's temple into a den of thieves, by your immoral principles and wicked practices? Ye are grown intolerably odious to the whole nation; you were deputed here by the people to get grievances redress'd, are yourselves gone! So! Take away that shining bauble there, and lock up the doors. In the name of God, go!"

Over the past decades in Nigeria, there has emerged an upsurge of ill-feelings and discontent from the public against members of legislative arm of the government due to the conclusion of many that members of legislative arm of the government use apparatuses of the government to enrich one another. Legislative corruption has become one of the most frequently used concepts among social surveyors whenever issues militating against democratic consolidation and development in Nigeria are discussed.

In view of the foregoing cases of corruption in the legislative arm in Nigeria, it is conceivable that legislative arm of the government has committed a faux pas in one of its important constitutional duties (Legislative Assembly's power of investigating corruption). It is a fact, although quite disturbing, that the National Assembly, in the last 12 years, have been regaled with graft allegations emanating from an institution that is supposed to be one of the strongest fulcrums of democracy. The integrity of the legislators has come under serious public scrutiny, and has yielded unflattering conclusions in many minds.

As a matter of fact, legislative corruption has led to loss of public confidence in the system. Many Nigerians see most members of National Assembly as irresponsible leaders that are not ready to adhere strictly to rule of law and due process. A Survey Report on Corruption (2003) showed poor public ratings of the legislative arm of the government with general perception of high levels of corruption. Also, Legislative corruption in Nigeria no doubt has inadvertently led to increase in the cost of legislating or governance in the country. The amount of money, time and other resources expended during the many so-called organized legislative probes and public hearings involving members of national assembly have in no small measure impacted negatively their service delivery and indeed taken its toll on taxpayers' money. Resources that could have been used for developmental purposes are channeled to air the views of the alleged and sometimes indicted legislators.

According to Vanguard Editorial of 27 March 2012, many Nigerians are of the opinion that members of legislative arm of the government in Nigeria have allowed themselves to be manipulated and used as a mere rubber stamp for the

government's executive agenda: this might not be unconnected with the outcome of their involvement in corrupt acts. Consequently, corruption might have robbed them the moral ground to challenge executive members that are corrupt.

Fall out from legislative corruption in Nigeria has indicated to some extent that, the National Assembly have recorded low success as far as exercising their powers to carry out oversight function over Ministries, Department and Agencies, MDAs which is provided for in Chapter V, part 1, Section 80(1)-(4) and 88 (1-2) (b) are concerned. According to the provision of this section of the constitution, each House of the National Assembly shall have power... to direct or cause to be directed an investigation into: any matter or thing with respect to which it has power to make laws; and the conduct of affairs of any person, authority, ministry or government department charged or intended to be charged, with the duty of responsibility for (i) executing or administering laws enacted by the National Assembly and (ii) disbursing or administering moneys appropriated or to be appropriated by the National Assembly." It also stated that "power" is conferred to enable the National Assembly "expose corruption, inefficiency or waste in the executive or administration of laws within its legislative competence and in the disbursement and administration of funds appropriated by it". To discharge these responsibilities, the two chambers of the national assembly have constituted different standing committees saddled with the task of overseeing different sectors of government and national life. However, there have been insinuations from many quarters in the country that most members of National Assembly through their activities in recent times have shown that legislator in Nigeria have seen the power of oversight functions as a way of making money. (See sections 88, 89 and 128 and 129 of the Constitution (n 16)).

Conclusion

The frequency and enormity of legislative corruption in Nigeria, and its implications for Nigerian public in relation to democratic consolidation is thus the subject of this paper. It reviews the rate of legislative corruption over the years in the country and assesses its effects on Nigerians whose interests the lawmakers are meant to represent and legislate over. The aim of this work has been to proffer invaluable lens through which unremitting legislative corruption in Nigeria could be viewed as a cancer which if not timely or properly checked could spell doom for democratic sustainability. Primarily, the thrust of this work is that though making appropriate law by members of national assembly may be a necessary tool in curbing corruption, yet there is the need for assembly men and women to focus on bolstering integrity in governance by adhering strictly to ethical behavior.

Costs of corruption, both economic and social are borne by citizens of a country particularly the poor individuals. Hence, in a democracy that works, people rely on members of their parliament who are only constrained by their constitution to set the framework of law and oversee its implementation in preventing and curbing corruption.

Also, it is an acknowledged fact that, consolidating democracy worldwide is much more difficult than establishing it. Particularly in Nigeria, avoiding democratic breakdown remains a daunting task in the face of ravaging socio-political and economic problems currently confronting the country; of which unrestrained spate of legislative corruption in the country is chief. Recent happenings in Nigeria have shown that legislative corruption is without doubt, one of the most extensive and most discussed of all the prevailing variant of corruption common among the three arms of the government, due to the regularity and enormity of the problem.

As stipulated in the Nigerian constitution, the necessity of constitutional roles of legislatures in achieving democratic consolidation cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, it is deducible from the dictate of Nigerian constitution that democratic consolidation nonetheless is predicated on the effectiveness and forthrightness of legislatures. Legislature occupies so critical place in democracy that it can be said without fear of contradiction that the history, growth and consolidation of democracy anywhere is intricately tied with the role of the legislatures and how legislative assemblies attempt to give meaning to people's sovereignty. As encapsulated by Adigun Agbaje, *"the roles performed by legislature could facilitate the smooth functioning of the democratic systems or by default its decline and ultimate collapse"*. Put differently, the roles of legislature are so important to the extent that it could either make or mar the growth of democracy in any society depending on how it is being played. Also, John K. Johnson and Robert T. Nakamura in 1999 convincingly extend the claim that effective legislatures help greatly in sustaining democracy by fulfilling the promise inherent in the public's right to be represented.

Discussions on legislative corruption have shown that a serious impediment to the success of any democratic rule is a corrupt legislature, and that unremitting legislative corruption disrupts so many aspects of people's life. It has also been stressed that an ethically compromised legislature means that the institutional mechanism designed to curb corruption, however well-targeted, efficient or honest, remains crippled. Unfortunately, evidence is steadily and increasingly surfacing of widespread corruption among legislatures in Nigeria. Problems related to legislative corruption have hit Nigerians like a tidal wave, leaving ordinary people floundering in a sea of anger, frustration, and hatred for democracy. For instance, Vanguard Newspaper of June 20, 2012 reported how a group of protesters who claimed to be the conscience of the nation stormed the premises of the National Assembly to protest against corruption in the Legislature.

Recent democratic realities in Nigeria have shown that effects of corruption on constitutional powers of legislatures are horrendously great. Legislative arm of the government lacks the good and transparent leadership required to strengthen the fight against corruption. Constitutional powers of legislatures to investigate corruption, combat corruption through legislation

and the power of impeachment are becoming ineffective due to legislative corruption. The question has been, how would corrupt legislators expose or impeach corrupt executive when they are guilty of the same offence. Consequently, this is causing the legislature the required public confidence; which in turn is necessary to sustain democracy.

The rising rate of Legislative corruption in Nigeria is a pointer to the fact that the country is yet to adhere fully to an essential prerequisite for a consolidated democracy, which states that, a state must exist whose institutions are able to hold officeholders accountable on most issues most of the time. In essence, part of what makes democratic consolidation attainable is when public office-holders are regularly and routinely answerable to citizens. But in Nigeria this is not so.

In a nutshell, the position of this work is that legislative corruption is rife in Nigeria and if the current spate of the problem is left unchecked, it portends danger of a monumental proportion to Nigerians. However, to check the malaise, it is recommended that all anti-corruption measures in the country should be more strengthened and the members of political class should desist from adopting political solution to solve legislative corruption. Political solution should not be used to replace legal solution. All the erring members of legislative arm should be made liable for their anomalies in order to serve as deterrence to others.

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