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Methods of Tackling Corruption in Nigeria

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The Basic Strategy for Effective Governance

Nigerians are very good at talking about how bad the Nigerian economy has been; how the rate of crimes has gone up, the rise of communal, religious and ethnic clashes, the down of Naira etc., without tangible solutions. But as long as we do not transform our words into deeds, into action there will NEVER be progress. Growth is fundamentally achieved by having in place some basic elements of economic development. Elements like stable **electricity, water, security** and **standards** for accountability.

1) There should be rules and criteria simple to understand and administer and the information made readily available: For instance, several activities in Nigeria undertaken by the government put it in a monopolistic position. And if a number of criteria have to be taken into consideration in arriving at a decision, then an element of subjectivity and judgement is involved. The problem may not necessarily be the degree of discretion but the extent to which the process is opaque and shrouded in mystery. Therefore, if the rules and criteria are simple to understand and administer and information about them is readily available, then the government's decisions would be more transparent.

2) There should be a wider distribution of the information on the rules, a better specification of the criteria, and greater transparency in respect of decisions reached and the institution of a system of appeal will help reduce the element of collusion and the abuse of the discretion that is built into the nature of the activity. For instance, transparency could be introduced in the selection of a school teacher by first specifying weights for academic and professional qualifications and the grades obtained and making this information public. Next, after the interviews have been conducted, the merit list could be published displaying, separately for each candidate, the marks allotted for qualifications and for performance in the interviews. The adoption of such a procedure will enable

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each applicant to, check if he has been assessed fairly, and whether the final selection was based on merit.

3) There should be appropriate reporting systems and supervisory controls and legislation on people's right to information on decisions taken or actions initiated by the Government. For example power corrupts when it is wielded without fear of accountability and reprisal. And when supervisors are in collusion with their subordinates it becomes even more difficult, if not impossible, to have an effective arrangement for accountability. The problem is accentuated by the difficulties of measuring both the performance of personnel as well as the impact of their decisions. The problem becomes more difficult to resolve simply because of the lack of appropriate reporting systems and supervisory controls, especially if cases involving disciplinary action take years to conclude or never.

Moreover, even under this definition, accountability is viewed more as a problem with the organisation and not as the accountability of the service-provider to the recipient of the service, the consumer, which is the more important level of accountability. The users of the service generally do not know the rules governing service provision, especially regarding service standards, partly because such standards have seldom been developed. Current legislation in Nigeria does not require the government or public agencies to disclose information on decisions taken or actions initiated. The public has also been brought up on the tradition that they have no right to any information and hence do not protest against the lack of information and the secrecy maintained on even the most basic matters hence, they are simply unaware of their rights and the recourse available to them if these rights are denied to them.

Even the political leadership wants to operate behind a cloak of secrecy, like the bureaucracy, and is not concerned at the denial of such a fundamental right to the ordinary citizen. The immediate, although limited, advantage of hiding the truth has far reaching long-term implications in which everyone loses, does not prevent public representatives from taking a myopic, extremely short-term view. This situation is skilfully exploited by the bureaucracy, which is the real long-term beneficiary of a regime operating under the cloak of secrecy and confidentiality. Furthermore, most citizens do not encounter corruption on a daily basis, but on the basis of distinct episodes involving interaction with public agencies in specific circumstances. If a citizen is not exposed to corrupt practices frequently (from which he also does not benefit directly), he is less likely to invest time and effort in taking up cudgels against it and lobby vigorously for structural and systemic reform.

Methods of Tackling Corruption

Corruption can be the product of collusion, in which both parties co-operate willingly to enter into a transaction, for example, transactions involving award of contracts, deal fixing, fiscal concessions, rulings in favour of a party either at the expense of someone else or by depriving the agency of revenues from penalties imposed on transgressions, etc.

Then there is corruption involving forced extractions in the form of bribes for rendering certain services or granting permissions, even of a routine nature, taking advantage of the plight in which the supplicant finds himself.

Other forms of corruptions are bribes paid in the hope of getting a favourable ruling. Much of the corruption of this variety is a product of the tradition under which people have been brought to keep in good humour the authority with the mandate to grant a permission; at times the purpose may not be to obtain a favour but to simply remain in the good books of the person carrying the authority to take a decision.

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Bribes paid either to extract favours or to ensure a level playing field, "in keeping with the traditions of the department involved" are not only difficult to detect but also difficult to address by enlisting sizeable support for reform. It would be relatively easier to garner support against corruption involving award of contracts, deal fixing, fiscal concessions, rulings in favour or forced payments.

This meaningless cancer (corruption) could be uprooted systematically through the proposed solutions below. **The two standard methods to tackle the menace are as follows:**

1) Since corruption emanates from the top, it can be checked by putting honest people in position of authority. This statement, however, begs the obvious question where Nigerians of integrity can be found.

a) The accountability mechanism provided by elections has failed to cleanse the system. The electorate, which laments the corruption of the present crop of politicians, has repeatedly voted them back into the legislature during elections. What enables the current system to perpetuate itself? Why don't the voters (specially the less privileged ones) revolt and refuse to vote for looters and plunderers and vote for those who propose reforms? From the behaviour of the people it seems that they prefer to vote for someone who can arrange the most favours from the system (and these favours could be rights being denied to them). It is these expectations of favours in gaining an unfair advantage and in getting around the system that partly explains why the less privileged voters do not refuse to vote for looters and plunderers and vote for someone who promises reforms instead. They have little hope that the system will be fair to them and that it will ever function in accordance with the norms of civilised societies.

b) Low salaries coerce most public servants into corruption. Whereas one would concede that salaries of public sector personnel need to be increased, one does not subscribe to the view that this measure alone will be enough for tackling the issue of corruption.

We undoubtedly need a significantly leaner but a professionally competent and well-paid bureaucracy. Substantial salary revisions should be able to attract the more educated and enterprising young men and women into the public sector. However, their entry into the public domain is more likely to improve productivity and efficiency, a commodity also in desperately short supply in the public sector, its impact on the level of corruption is likely to be marginal, without strong accountability mechanism.

But then we have seen (and argued above) that without greater openness and transparency and without a radical restructuring of a system that grants discretionary powers to those in authority and then protects them through secrecy and denial of information, layers upon layers of supervisory cadre and elaborate disciplinary procedures will simply fail to make the bureaucracy accountable to the citizenry.

c) Therefore, to address these issues in a meaningful manner we will have to reduce the opportunities for indulging in corrupt practices; by reducing the incentives for public office, through greater privatisation and deregulation of the economy, decentralisation, merit based recruitment, disclosures of the incomes and wealth of all representatives and key public functionaries. A beginning in this direction will have to be made by first reforming the economy just like in China, and at the same time reforming the political process. The way in which political parties are financed, particularly around elections, is central to this issue.

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3

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d) Next we need to identify areas where control of corruption will be relatively easier and the gains will be high, especially in economic and political terms similar to South Korea. Some of the obvious proposals in this regard would be the following:

2) There should be a requirement that all reasons advanced to justify the use of the discretionary power should be documented and accessible to all parties to the transaction. By introducing transparency, the practice of exercising discretionary powers frequently and with impunity, without fear of accountability, will be automatically curtailed.

a) People should have access to information on the decisions and actions taken by public authorities. The right to information is critical to the effective functioning of democracies. The Freedom of Information Act needs to be promulgated after appropriate revisions.

b) Service standards need to be developed and the citizen should have information on the procedures and mechanisms for obtaining redress and the institutions to be approached for the associated remedial action. This calls for the creation of an Anti-corruption Agency that should be legislated, independent to check corrupt officials, the so-called 419ners and economic saboteurs. Such an Agency should be given its power by a Bill passed by the national assembly and the legislators must approve its directors to avoid being used as an instrument for political witch-hunt. Wider distribution of information of anti-corruption crusade will go a long way in empowering citizens to challenge corruption and abuse of power. It will be essential here to understand clearly what has and has not worked, and to pour greatest resources resolutely into those approaches that stand the greatest chance of continuing growth.

c) Today the media is playing a major role in exposing corruption, thereby rendering a laudable service. There is the need to restructure the NTA so that it is accessible at every corner of the country in its entirety. Brands of attractive programs and informative issues should systematically be added and aired. It can strengthen the bands of crusaders against corruption by supporting and extolling the efforts of such people.

d) The chambers of commerce and various other associations of businessmen can collectively take the stand that they will not be a party to corrupt practices. So far, despite their complaints on the pervasiveness of corruption, they have chosen to remain silent on how this issue should be tackled. We all know the reason for this stance. Individual entrepreneurs only take into consideration the short-term interest of their own corporations, regardless of the fact that the business culture is being damaged in the process. In this case it would be vital for each credible company to register with the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) and for the NIPC to fully investigate and confirm the viability of such businesses before issuing them with a certificate and displaying their logo and info on their web site. This way, foreign partners can easily verify the claim of a company in Nigeria by simply visiting the NIPC web site. This will promote more investment into the country quickly, reliably and hence provide jobs, security and reduce corrupt practices.

Eventually, however, awareness and commitment on the part of public representatives and opinion makers to control corruption will determine the degree of success of the initiatives taken to check the growth of this cancer and to cleanse the system. We cannot expect the elite, the beneficiaries of the present system, to change a system that is heavily biased in their favour by devising mechanisms that will result in the withdrawal of their present privileges and the elimination of the rents that the current system confers on them. They will have to be outnumbered into responding to organised and persistent pressure from groups in civil society for the reform and restructuring of the system.

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At present Nigeria does not, like countries with long standing democracies, implement corrective and institutional arrangements restraining the excesses of the decision-makers. However, a host of changes are taking place both at the international and domestic levels which will facilitate the development of institutions, mechanisms and processes to bring to book the dishonest running of the national apparatus. In this regard, the most important opportunity today is being provided by the rapid pace at which barriers of knowledge and communication are being removed.

The information revolution

Nigerians must be made to take advantage of the Internet and satellite communication. The Internet allows us to seek out the information (learn, communicate, conduct business, find entertainment etc) we want and ignore the rest. The material we seek comes to us in a text-based e-magazine or database. This information revolution will improve our knowledge on the initiatives and efforts being taken by other nations, and make government job much easier and better, and provide fast and reliable medium of other information (such as the cases of corruption against political leaders pursued, vigorously in developed countries), and to check the scourge of corruption. Nigerian government must re-assess the tariffs imposed on all computers and other communication devices and devise better means of promoting the advantages of computers in the whole country. For example by computerizing all government institutions

Basic Strategic Method

The implementation can, in its most basic outline be summarized as three basic proposals to be administered by the anti-corrupt Agency.

- 1) First I propose the identification, selection; training and mobilization of a new group of 600,000 vision specialists (must represent the whole tribes of the country). They should be cross-trained in both development and appropriate reporting systems and supervisory controls skills, though the later area will be disclosed only selectively within the people groups where they will be assigned to work.
- 2) Second, I propose that these vision specialists concentrate their efforts exclusively on the problems already identified (above). In particular, there should be lots of improvisation. They should focus on one of the government institution one after the other on a block basis.
- 3) Third, I propose that second group, new vision specialists are to be created and allowed to *supplement* the efforts of the previous group, and create new support mechanisms, none of which should interfere with the efforts of the first vision specialists but only check them. As should be clear, two-hungers strategy should be designed as a supplementary strategy (the groups are aware of their existence but unaware of each other). As such, it should enhance (rather than conflict with) most of the plans.

In sending out this new force of curtailment of corruption, we prepare them into a life and death battle equipped with government support and into most restrictive government institutions, either giving them an appointment (at all levels) to watch what goes on, appearing as soliciting for contracts, or just as ordinary citizen seeking for some information etc. Clearly, God's grace is sufficient to pursue the radical reform. But the government also need to be good stewards. To this end it must maximize the effectiveness of the vision specialists by massive media campaign in spreading even a trivial disclosure of an act of corruption and systematically relegate or discharge the perpetrators. As with any battle, the outcome will be influenced by a number of factors.

Two of these are superior personnel and superior training and their degree of patriotism. The third factor will be continued superior strategy that will be too much to present in this article. But to help develop an understanding of the overall strategy, there is the need to see it within a broader context. Though some will disagree, I believe that each of these Basic Strategic Methods must be

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5

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taken for each of the groups, sowing many good seeds while allowing other efforts to be pulled if necessary. The first factor is initial willingness of the Government to accept the method of change.

Finally I would like us to remember that, we Nigerians face great challenges. On the surface, there are communities that would prefer to separate, rather than share a country. There is a strong minority that fears marginalization and its distinctive culture overwhelmed. There is unfair struggle for power. There is a rich resource base, and a sense of great potential waiting to be realized, and serious disparities exist among the regions. The once “great Nigeria’ appears to be drifting further apart. Yet, I have not seen a single issue of substance that is insurmountable. Though some will disagree with me, but the fact remains that I have seen NONE whatsoever. I have been privileged to look at the Nigerian public life from outside (objectively) from across Europe up to North America, and have been into most part of Nigeria where I met, talked and listened to thousands of Nigerians from across the board. Throughout that experience, I have not met one single person who proclaims that there are irreconcilable differences in Nigeria. There are, of course, different views about the appropriate power of the government, or the appropriate role of the government, or this right and those rights, or Senate this and that, President this and that or a thousand other important issues. Even those that advocate for separation eventually say that we have more to benefit from working together under one umbrella.

In my judgement, many of these issues, such as those mentioned above, and the issue of national reconciliation are urgent and cannot simply be ignored. They are real issues, and by God not unsolvable. None of this issue is so fundamental that it should cause a country to fail; particularly a country that, by any objective standard, deserves the best for it has the best. Nor does the sum of those differences warrant breaking up the country that has so much in common, so much to gain from our differences.

Successful countries today, were those whose citizens, at one time or the other, under strong leadership, rose above personal, sectional, political or religious differences and worked together to build a viable nation in order to guarantee the welfare of its citizens. It is on this note that I believe with the present young spirited Nigerians at home and from the Diaspora and their commitment to a better Nigeria, and anti-corruption crusade, that we shall succeed where others have failed and Nigeria will again rise up to its prominence, the one true Great Nigeria.

MAY GOD BLESS NIGERIA!!

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SHORT BIO

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Dr. Engr. Baba J ADAMU: was born in Kaduna (Unguan Liman), Kaduna State, Nigeria. Dr. Baba Jibrin Adamu is the youngest son of the late Malam Alhaji Adamu Jibrin Imam, the former Chief Imam of Kaduna State Central Mosque located in Kano Road Kaduna. Dr. Baba J Adamu represented Kaduna State based on academic qualification to go on a scholarship program to study Civil Engineering up to Masters Degree in Poland in 1986. Having completed successfully his M.Sc in 1993, again based on academic excellence received a Polish Government Scholarship to continue to do Doctorate degree in Industrial Research and silo/bunker Technology. Dr. Adamu specializes in Silos and Security Bunker technology and completed his Ph.D in 2000 with Excellence. He then moved to Toronto, Canada in 2000, where is acquired various Certificates in IT, Management and Business at Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, Toronto Ontario, as well as at the Banf Academy for Business, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA. He now lives and works in Canada as an Engineering/Security Consultant and as the President and CEO of iNetworks Canada, a Managed Technology Solution company based in Toronto. As of this writing, dr Adamu is undergoing United Nations training on Global Terrorism, Law of Arm Conflict and UN working System through the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR POCI), New York, USA.

Dr Adamu has tremendous experience in management of men and materials in private sector, good knowledge of international and Nigerian political, economic and social environment, high level of integrity, evidence of personal discipline as well as courage of conviction. He has a strong conviction for the respect for the rule of law, respect for human rights, beliefs in popular participation and consultation, knowledge and understanding of the working of the international system, voluntary service to the community, sense of history and lesson, competence in concepts and tools of development and respect for African value and cherished all Nigerian traditions. Dr Adamu is an expert both in Structural engineering and . In his own words:

"Where despair and hopelessness exist, those who have the ability to take action have the moral responsibility to take action to help those who live on the bare edge of survival. And democracy is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of our humanity, an ideal we must carry, a trust we must bear and pass along. And even after all these years, we have a long way yet to travel, that is why **We must all be involved ..." - Baba Jibrin Adamu, Ph.D Engr.**

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