

**The legitimization of Corruption: Analysing Public Perception of Police Extortion and Bribery among NURTW Members in Southwestern Nigeria**

---

**Apeloko, Olubunmi David**

Department of Public Administration,  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife  
Osun State Nigeria

**Akinola, Akinlolu Elijah**

Department of Political Science,  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife  
Osun State Nigeria

**Abstract**



*Corruption as a perverted form of State-Society relations, in which the state and its agencies are used to further private interests to the detriment of the society, has become the main channel of exploitation' through which the personnel of the Nigeria Police Force exploit the general public that they supposedly serve, through extortion and bribery. This 'channel of exploitation' has become a dominant feature on the highways and at police check points with drivers and passengers at the receiving end. The study focuses on this, using the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), an association of commercial drivers, as "supplier" in the "demand-supply acts" of corruption, as case study. It adopts a bottom-top approach to analyze public perception of police corruption; its causes, consequences and the prevention mechanism. It seeks to determine if police corruption on the highways is a consequence of attitudes and moral codes of members of the public which tolerate or legitimize its acts. The paper employs primary method of data collection in form of interviews with respondents selected from the NURTW members and other stakeholders in the transport sector in three southwestern states of Oyo, Ondo and Lagos. Secondary sources of*

*data, such as reports and newspaper publications, are also utilized.*

**Keywords:** Corruption, Police extortion, Bribery, NURTW, Nigeria Police Force.

## **Introduction**

Nigeria in all of its over half a century years as an independent nation has been smitten by myriads of issues and challenges among which are the challenges of nation and state building, political instability; resulting from the incursion of the military, over—centralization of the country's federal structure and the challenge posed by a monolithic economy dependent oil among others. While all of these challenges have negative consequences for the country's economic and political development, none of the challenges has severe impacts on economic development, the legitimacy of government and its capability to deliver welfare services to the public, as corruption – the abuse or miss-use of public power for private gain.

Indeed from the late colonial era to present period, corruption has been identify as the number one factor bedeviling the country and subsequent governments had taken steps towards curbing the scourge of corruption, which today, given its ubiquitous presence in virtually all sectors of public life in the country, shows no sign of abating. The endemic nature of corruption in Nigeria has earned the country the unenviable reputation of being listed by Transparency International, as the most corrupt country in the world in 1995 (T.I, 1995)and has subsequently been ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world.

It is therefore a surprise that given the prevalence of corrupt practices in the country, when ordinary Nigerians speak of corruption, they tend to make reference to only one type of corruption – the abuse of public power by those in the highest level of decision making (be it, executive, legislature or judiciary) for private enrichment – a bias conception of corruption as unlawful acts undertaken only by agents of the state to the detriment of the people in the society. They find it difficult to equally regard as corrupt, acts such as “tipping” a clerk in the civil service, an attendee at a public hospital in order for certain

services (which are free) to be rendered or even the outright bribe demanded by policemen when some citizens violated the law. Petty corruption of this kind is often seen as a “survival strategy” in which anyone serious about getting things done must engage in.

The dominant view in the literature on corruption in Nigeria also studied corruption from the top down with a focus on the state and its agents alone. Members of the society often form the supply side of corrupt transactions. Therefore studying corruption from the bottom up helps to “reveal the complex ways the phenomenon is woven into the fabric of political and economic life” of the citizenry (Smith, 2009<sup>1</sup>). The paper seeks to fill the gap in the literature by adopting a bottom-top approach to analyze police corruption (a form of petty corruption which ordinary Nigerians witness, partake in and often take for granted), its causes, consequences and prevention mechanism. The study adopts as case study, National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) an association of commercial bus drivers in the three southwest states of Oyo, Osun and Ondo, as “supplier” in the demand -supply acts of corruption. It seeks to determine if police corruption on the highways is a consequence of attitudes and moral codes of members of the public which tolerate or legitimize its acts.

### **Corruption: Literature review and conceptual discourse**

Corruption in its classical usage has reflected in the works of Plato, Aristotle and other scholars of the medieval era in Europe, has a slightly different meaning than it does today. Rooted in the traditional understanding of corruption is a division between what is good and bad and corruption is used to describe that which can make a good thing (say a virtue, system of government or quality) degenerates into something bad (vice). Corruption in this regard according to Bratsis, (2008) invokes a “strong image of decay and regression.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Smith, Daniel Jordan. "Everyday Corruption and the State: Citizens and Public Officials in Africa." (2009): 408-411.

<sup>2</sup> Bratsis, Peter. "Corrupt compared to what? Greece, capitalist interests, and the specular purity of the state." (2003).

While corruption is still regarded as “evil”, “cancer” or even as “anti-social behavior” (Amundsen,1999; & Osoba,1996) due to the negative effects on a political system, it has acquired a new meaning.<sup>3</sup> Today, it is almost universally conceived of as the abuse of (Public) power for private benefit ( Johnson,2005;). The modern conceptualization of corruption (unlike in the traditional) is based on the distinction between public and private interests and anything capable of producing conflict between the distinction is termed as corrupt (Bratsis,2008). It is this split between public and private that makes Olagoke, (2012) to assert that “corruption is associated in varying degrees with modern states.”<sup>4</sup> For example, a king, in pre-colonial Africa, who uses the resources “extracted” from the people in his kingdom for his personal gain is not corrupt in the modern sense, since such distinction between public and private interest is hardly possible in those era. Whereas agents of the state, such as ministers, civil servants, the police etc, will be regarded as corrupt if they abuse their positions as public officials to enrich themselves.

Also in the literature on corruption emphasis is mostly placed on the state (public) and its officials. This is reflected in many definitions of corruption. For-instance in Nye Collins’ classical and most widely definition, corruption is conceived as

“behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private (interest) regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gain; or violates rules against the exercise of a certain types of private regarding – regarding influence .” (cited in Agbiboa, 2012)<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Osoba, Segun O. "Corruption in Nigeria: historical perspectives." *Review of African Political Economy* 23, no. 69 (1996): 371-386.; Amundsen, Inge. *Political corruption: An introduction to the issues*. Chr. Michelsen Institute, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Olagoke, Olakunle O. "The extra-territorial scope of the anti-corruption legislation in Nigeria." *Int'l Law*. 38 (2004): 71.

<sup>5</sup> Agbiboa, Daniel Egiegba. "Between corruption and development: The political economy of state robbery in Nigeria." *Journal of business ethics* 108, no. 3 (2012): 325-345

In the same vein Eker (1981) viewed corruption as the "description of activities emanating from and relating to officialdom."<sup>6</sup> Irregular activities among private individuals according to him, "are a matter of private enterprise" for they are "straightforward theft, fraud, embezzlement, etc." when Johnson, (2005), asserted that "corruption involves the abuse of a trust, generally one involving the public power for private benefit, which often, but by no means always, comes in the form of money," he was merely echoing the view mostly expressed in the literature which linked corruption to the public sector and view it as a public sector problem (Tangari & Mwema, 2006).

The defects of this view of corruption is not only as rightly pointed out by Amundsen, (1999), of its state centric approach and its "demand oriented perspective," but due to its bias and limited understanding of corruption. This is because corruption is at best a form of transaction involving on the one hand a party making a demand and at the other a party producing the supply. The "supply-side" of most corrupt acts are the members of the society – the general public. Who seek to use their wealth as means of gaining undue advantage in their interactions with officials of government. Corruption is therefore an exchange mechanism in which wealth pursues power with the expectation of gaining undue advantage (Eker, 1981).<sup>7</sup> It can also be added that the use of power (political power) for private wealth is corruption. Thus, where private wealth and public power overlap corruption occurs (Rose- Ackerman,2006).<sup>8</sup> When influential members of the society or private companies make payment to public official in return for benefit, both the members of the public and the state officials that engage in it are equally corrupt. Corruption is therefore a perverted form of

---

<sup>6</sup> Eker, Varda. "On the origins of corruption: Irregular incentives in Nigeria." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 19, no. 1 (1981): 173-182.

<sup>7</sup> Eker, Varda. "On the origins of corruption: Irregular incentives in Nigeria." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 19, no. 1 (1981): 173-182.

<sup>8</sup> Rose-Ackerman, Susan. "Corruption." In *Readings in public choice and constitutional political economy*, pp. 551-566. Springer, Boston, MA, 2008.

state- societal relation in which the state and its agencies are used (by its officials) to further private interests, to the detriment of the society.

Corruption as diverse acts, ranging from the paying of bribes, embezzlements to any abusive public power for personal gain, can be categorized into different types. The forms that corruption assumes According to Amundsen, (1999), can be identified based on “who are the actors, initiators and profiteers, how it is done and to what extent it is practiced.” Using this method Amundsen (1999), distinguished between political and bureaucratic corruption; extractive and distributive corruption.<sup>9</sup> Political corruption is form of corruption found in high places as it involves those holding political office such as head of states, ministers etc. Bureaucratic corruption is a petty form of corruption found in civil service and other agencies of government. Corruption is either extractive or redistributive nature. It is extractive when the benefits of corrupt transactions benefit the political elites. It is redistributive when some influential citizens take advantage of weak states to be the greatest beneficiaries of corrupt transactions. For example, when those in the business community use their “connections” to get dubious tax waivers or exemption from the government, the loser is the state.

Distinction has also been made between spontaneous and institutionalized forms of corruption (APEC, 2006). Spontaneous corruption is a feature of societies with “strong ethics and moral in public service.” In such societies corrupt practice is rare and its occurrence is random. The Institutionalized or systemic form of corruption occurs in societies where a culture of corruption prevails. Although the argument that corruption can be beneficial once held sway (Johnson, 2005), overall it is believed that corruption has negative effects on the political and economic system of a state

---

<sup>9</sup> Amundsen, Inge. *Political corruption: An introduction to the issues*. Chr. Michelsen Institute, 1999.

(Rayfisman & Robert Gatti..., APEC, 2006, Agbibo, 2012).<sup>10</sup> It hinders the capacity of government to deliver public goods, since resources are diverted for the enrichment of the elites, which over time negatively affect the legitimacy of government.

### **Corruption: The Nigerian experience**

Nigeria as a country has the unenviable reputation as one of the world's most corrupt countries (Transparency International, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2015). The Nigerian experience with corruption can liken to a disease that no drug has been able to cure. Since independence till date, successive administrations (military and civilian) had tried to tackle the menace without significant success. The origin of corruption in Nigeria can be traced to the advent of colonialism (Osoba, 1996 and Pierce, 2006) which created the Nigerian state and necessitated the split between public and private interest.<sup>11</sup> Colonialism aid the emergence of corruption in Nigeria through the "forceful" wielding together of the diverse people, who occupied the territories that made up the country and who are divided along the tribal, ethnic and religious lines, colonialism distorts the distinction between the Private and Public. It created what Osaghae (1978) refers to as "two publics," a state public and a primordial public. With indigenous colonial officials (and even subsequent officials of the post independent era) seeing their position in government as an opportunity to transfer benefits or resources from the state public (usually regarded as an abstraction) to a primordial public define in terms of familiar, tribal or ethnic affiliation. The absence of a sense of national identity that resulted facilitated the growth of corruption in Nigeria – making the public service to be seen as a mechanism for personal enrichment.

---

<sup>10</sup> Agbibo, Daniel Egiegba. "Between corruption and development: The political economy of state robbery in Nigeria." *Journal of business ethics* 108, no. 3 (2012): 325-345.

<sup>11</sup> Osoba, Segun O. "Corruption in Nigeria: historical perspectives." *Review of African Political Economy* 23, no. 69 (1996): 371-386.; Pierce, Steven. "Looking like a state: colonialism and the discourse of corruption in Northern Nigeria." *Comparative studies in society and history* 48, no. 4 (2006): 887-914.

Other factors highlighted as the causes of corruption in Nigeria are; economic underdevelopment, state control of valuable assets, and oil wealth. These factors do not sufficiently explain why corruption remains an “unstoppable” force in Nigeria. It is perhaps the nature of leadership and their attitude to corruption coupled with the “irreversible” nature of corruption itself that best explain why the tide of corruption has remain a difficult one to stem. This is because corruption (particularly, political corruption) starts from the echelon of power (the political leaders) and flows to lower agencies of government. Roteberg, (2009) explain this when he opined that:

“Lesser officials and politicians steal from the state and cheat their follow citizens because of a prevailing permissive ethos. If their immediate superiors steal, cheat, lower ranked civil servants and security personnel believed that they, too have a license to enrich themselves corruptly... further up the scale, too, middle ranking government officials of all kinds look to their heads of state and cabinet ministers to see what they can get away with...”

It can therefore be argued that where the political leaders are not corrupt and display intolerance to corruption, other officials down the echelon will be discouraged from involving themselves in corrupt enterprise, thereby reducing corruption. The perception that most Nigerians have of their leaders is that all are guilty of corruption and this fact to an extent explains why successive administrations in the country are ineffective in the war against corruption. The “irreversible” nature of corruption also helps to the reason why the menace continues unabated in the country. According to Oliver (1999), “the more corruption develops, the more it becomes engrained in social habits and the less it becomes to retreat.” Corruption breeds corruption and where it has been tolerated (as the case of Nigeria demonstrates) it becomes difficult to stop. This is because the expansion of corruption brings about a form of “corruption culture” which has the tendency to become a permanent feature of a country.



When reference is made to corruption or is discussion is made about it in Nigeria, people tend to speak of political corruption and accusing fingers is pointed at political office holders and top civil servants. Petty corruption, such as “tipping” of clerks at government offices, giving policemen at roadblocks money in order to avoid unnecessary delays and the like, which take place everywhere and one in which most Nigerians had experienced either as active participant or passive one, hardly attract the kind of condemnation that is associated with political corruption that is secretive in nature. One reason for this could be due to the fact that political corruption which always involves millions of naira is seen by most as a means through which the elites short changed ordinary Nigerians while petty corruption is seen a survival strategy which afford ordinary Nigerians the opportunity to make the most of a corrupt system. The paradox according to Smith, (2009) is obvious and it is that ordinary Nigerians can be “active participant in the social reproduction of corruption even as they its primary victim and its principal critics.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Predatory Policing: A symptom of police corruption in Nigeria**

The police as the agent of the state, is charged with the responsibility of enforcing the law and maintaining law and order in a state (Alemika & Chukwuma, No date). It is expected that the police as an institution will at all times uphold and defend the law. When the police deviate from the noble expectation of law maintenance to abuse, police corruption ensues and predatory policing is the consequence.

Police corruption like other forms of corruptions involves the abuse of public trust for private gain and (to a great extent) the violation of law on the part of police officers (Roebuck & Barker, 1974).<sup>13</sup> This definition can be stretched to include members of

---

<sup>12</sup> Smith, Daniel Jordan. "The paradoxes of popular participation in corruption in Nigeria." *Corruption, Global Security, and World Order* (2009): 283-309.

<sup>13</sup> Roebuck, Julian B., and Thomas Barker. "A typology of police corruption." *Social problems* 21, no. 3 (1974): 423-437.

society who in order to gain undue advantage or avoid the consequence of the law conniving with police officers by offering bribes or other incentives. When the police engage in corrupt acts, members of the society suffer, because the police instead of acting as the protector of the people will become its number one predator. According to Gerber & Mendelson (2008), policing can be said to be predatory “where police activities are mainly devoted to the personal enrichment and self-preservation of the police rather than the protection of the public.” Under predatory policing police corruption and violence are not only widespread but are the rule rather than the exception.

The term predatory policing best described the activities of the Nigerian Police Force which has been labeled as corrupt, ineffective and brutal agency (Ajayi& Lounge; 2004, Alemika & Chukwuma; No date, and Hills; 2008). The predatory nature of the Nigerian Police can be seen from the myriads of human rights abuses committed by police officers in the process of extorting money. According to Human Right Watch, (2010), these abuses “ranged from arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention to threats and acts of violence, including physical and sexual assault, and even extrajudicial killings.” In the eyes of most Nigerians the police remain the most corrupt public institution in the country (Transparency International, 2015) and many of the abuses committed by the police are as a result of corruption which is widespread not just in the police alone but in the whole country generally.

Police corruption in the country is of three types namely “grand corruption” which involves the embezzlement of public funds to cover basic police operations by senior police officers, “petty corruption” practice by some junior police officers who abuse their position as police to receive bribes and extort money from people and “booty corruption” which involves both the senior and junior officers participating in the sharing of returns from corrupt transactions. In this type of corruption, junior officers are made to pay some of the money they extorted from the members of the public to those officers up in the hierarchy.

While other forms of police corruption only benefit few personnel of the police force, “booty corruption” is unique in

that the police force as an institution is a beneficiary due to the remittance made possible by those lower in the chain of command. "Booty corruption" also helps drive police violence due to the pressure mounted on junior officers to "perform"- to bring in more money. The Human Right Watch (2010) revealed that policemen who did not meet up with the agreed amount expected to line the pockets of senior officials are usually transfer to "non- lucrative post." Petty corruption aside from being practiced by junior officers is also the closet to the ordinary citizens because they bear its brunt directly. It is from corruption of this kind that resources (cash or kind) are extracted, in the form of bribes and extortion, from the society to the police illegally, which also facilitates the practice of "booty corruption". The poor as well as other low income earners are vulnerable to petty corruption especially extortion and bribery. Police corruption though limited to the police is caused by same factors responsible for corruption in general. For-instance lack of accountability is a major factor entrenching corruption. Where officials have both monopoly and discretion but are not accountable, corruption flourishes (Discretion + monopoly - accountability= corruption; Lawson, 2009). In the case of the police in Nigeria, officers have control of the use of force and also have the discretion in decided whether an individual had violate the law or not but are hardly held accountable for their actions. This leads to the culture of impunity on the part of the police who are emboldened to participate in corruption.

Under-funding is another reason why the police resort to corrupt practices to supplement funds for the running of police operations. The punch newspaper (July, 11, 2013) observed that many police stations in the country are managed from the proceed of bribes and extortion collected by police who go on regular patrols as well as philanthropic gestures of members of the public. Bribery and extortion in this regard instead of being condemn are justified as means to help the stations run effectively.

It is perhaps unreasonable to expect the police to be morally upright in a country like Nigeria, where corrupt behaviors are extensive and pervasive. Policemen are part of the Nigerian society in which wealth and power have become a measure of success. Corruption in the country is not just "a way of life" but a

“goal and an outlook” towards positions in government. Public offices are viewed as a means for personal enrichment. Since corruption in one public sector have the tendency to breed more corruption in other parts, the police take their cue from their superiors in the police force and political leadership, who engages in corrupt practices, to replicate corruption in their sphere of influence.

The Nigerian Police Force can be said to be both a major beneficiary of the proceeds of corruption and its victim. Bribery and extortion which is a common method use by the police to extract money from members of the public has been described as an illegal taxation (Human Right Watch, 2010) and also a means for supplementing low police salary (Sisk, 1982).<sup>14</sup> This has the tendency to reduce the initiative on the part of decision makers to increase the salary of police since the proceeds from bribes and extortion is an informal bonus. Corruption undermines the police in carrying out its function of enforcing and maintaining law and order. If the police as an institution was enmeshed in corruption it is difficult to imagine how such police can prevent or fights not just corruption but crimes and other violations of the law. The image of the police in the society is ruined by corruption, for corrupt motives is a source of police brutality, a method for coercing people to succumb to bribes and extortion (Alemika & Chukuma, ), which makes the police to be regarded as enemy rather than friends of the people.

### **National union of road transport workers: History, structure and membership**

The National Union of Road Transport Workers, otherwise known by its acronyms NURTW, is an umbrella body of commercial bus drivers (both inter and intra state) in Nigeria. It was registered as a trade union in 1978 and since then the activities of road transport in Nigeria has revolved around the NURTW (Olubomehin, 2012). The NURTW is also an affiliate of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC). Current estimate project the numbers of members of the union to be well above a million

---

<sup>14</sup> Sisk, David E. "Police corruption and criminal monopoly: Victimless crimes." *The Journal of Legal Studies* 11, no. 2 (1982): 395-403.

people. This is because membership is on the increase on a daily basis. The main objective of the union which is to promote the economic welfare of its members qualified the body to be seen as a pressure group.

As a National union of road transport workers in the country, the NURTW has administrative structures manned by officials in all the states of the federation. While the national headquarter of the union is located in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), under the control of the national president, in each of the 36 states the chairman acted as the head of the union. Each of the states are in turn divided into a number of units based on the number of local government councils in the state.

NURTW's major source of fund are the daily dues paid by its members. The dues paid by members ranges from 700 -1500 naira daily. For intra-state commercial bus or taxi drivers, they pay a mandatory token of 100 Naira at every bus terminal to certain officials of the union. This fees are most times collected twice a day- morning and evening. The proceeds of these money are used for the daily upkeep of the chairman and other executive officials of the union in the state as well as for the running of the administration of the union.

The NURTW in the south-west region of Nigeria share certain peculiarities among which is the rapport between the leadership of the union and members of the political class in the states. The period from 1999, when democratic rule was returned to Nigeria to 2003, NURTW was used by nearly all the government of the state to promote their political agenda and to further entrench their party rule in their respective states. This was particularly true in Oyo state (until 2015), where the union was used by sitting Governors for unleashing 'political thugs' on opponents and outright intimidation of voters supporting opponents. While this ugly fact makes many people to regard the NURTW in lesser light- as an association of hoodlums, most members of the union are responsible citizens. The study focused on the members of the NURTW because the body has the highest number of drivers who are in regular contact with members of the Nigerian Police Force.

**National Union of Road Transport Workers: A pressure group legitimatizing or tolerating (police) corruption?**

For corrupt acts or transactions to take place it requires the involvement of at least two parties – the party making the demand and the other giving the supply (making the payment). In the course of the study it was discovered that drivers and their umbrella body, the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) mostly formed the supply-side of (police) corruption and it is this “partnership” that encourage corruption to flourish on the highway and at police roadblocks in the cities. Any casual observer of the highways in Nigeria will notice the exchange that takes place between drivers and policemen – a surreptitious exchange of cash (ranging from #50 - #100) loosely concealed in the driver’s fist in order for him to hand it over to the policeman who waved the bus to stop. This form of “exchange” which in many developed countries of the world is widely condemned as corruption or extortion by police officials is a common feature of the highways in Nigeria, and hardly attracts the kind of strong condemnation and public criticism that the citizens of these countries meted out to it.

It is obvious that payment to the police at checkpoint is ‘compulsory’ as any driver who dare not paying will be subjected unnecessary delay and harassment by the police. Base on this fact one is likely to conclude that the relationship between drivers and the police they made “illegal payment” to is not cordial. However Interviews with respondents who were drivers and also members of the NURTW prove this wrong. Many of the drivers randomly selected for interview were of the view that they have a cordial relationship with the police and other security agents on the highways. They were of the view that the police as well as other security agents on the highways are there to protect them and guarantee their safety.

Only few of the drivers interviewed admitted to ever paying policemen bribes when their vehicle license expired or for other offenses in order to escape sanction. According to these set of drivers, the police usually initiate discussion on the amount to be paid before they were let go. One of the drivers noted that;

“the driver, will beg the policeman... then the police will decide whether to allow such driver go by asking for money before he can forgive.”

Other drivers who claimed not to pay bribes were quick to point out that since their vehicle particulars were valid and they have not committed any crime known to law there is no basis to pay police any money. A further probe of these drivers reveals that they actually give the police money but they did not see it as bribe or extortion. To them, if a policeman is “polite” in his manner of asking for money they will give such officials money. In the words of one of the drivers who claimed not to pay bribes to police:

“If a policeman joking asked for money from me... I will give such a policeman. It is not bribe because he begged for it. As a driver I can decide who I will help with my money. It all depends on the manner of approach... I can dash police money not because of today but tomorrow, this is because they (the police) know us and there is no way you cannot commit an offense, for example I use a private number for commercial bus. They (the police) can use that against me... so if they ask for money I give them so that I will be in their good book”

The views of drivers such as the one quoted above makes the line dividing extortion, gifts-giving and bribery a complicated one. From the perspective of any observer, extortion which means collecting money through the use or threat of the use of force by police (more than bribery, which is payment made by drivers to evade charges from law enforcement officials) is common on the Nigerian highways. The police most of the time demand (through their gesture) for money with the unspoken threat that failure to do so will be unnecessary delay for the drivers and the passengers in his bus. A driver who gives policemen money in this way will not be paying bribe, since he has not committed any crime but he is being coerced to pay. Many of the drivers who claim not to pay bribe (but admitted to extortion or giving police men money willingly) like the one quoted above, were in reality paying “dormant bribes” that can

be activated long after the payment as been made. This is because the money they give to the police in the forms of extortion or gifts are used as “insurance” for a time when they are likely to infringe on the law so as to influence police officials to pardon them. Therefore claims of not paying bribes should not be taken to mean that they do not engage in corrupt practices (bribing police officials).

All the drivers selected for interview believed that the idea of asking money from drivers by policemen (and to some extent paying bribes) is wrong and can be described as corruption though giving policemen money is a way of avoiding “unnecessary delays” and also a way to appreciate them for their services. One of the respondents have this to say;

“It is not always wrong to give the police money. It is important to appreciate them for their duty. It is not easy standing in the sun... such a person need drugs.”

In the course of the study, it was discovered that not just the drivers as individuals are victim of extortion from the police but also their union as body. Some officials of the NURTW (local government units) whose members engaged in intra city transport in Ibadan admitted that the police visit their unit’s chairmen and other members of the executives in other to collect money, on a weekly basis. Members (drivers) in addition to their membership dues also pay “police money” (“owoolopa”) monthly to the executives, so that payment can be made whenever the police came to visit. According to one member of the executive at one of the units park of the NURTW at Ibadan;

“it is not only that we remit money to them (police) at their stations... they also come to our parks and we have to settle them (pay them)... it is not just our union alone that do this. Whenever they come to visit us we must give them something otherwise our members will be harassed unnecessarily on the road by the police... in other for us to meet their demands we usually ask our members to pay extra money in addition to their dues for ‘police money.’”



When asked about what their union (NURTW) can do or has done to curb police corruption on the road. All of the respondents believed that there is nothing their union as body can do to stop the menace. They all point to the government (President, Inspector general Of Police) as the only institution that can effectively stop extortion and other forms of corruption by the police. It is clear that as a pressure group the members of the NURTW perceived themselves as powerless or helpless in the face of police extortion. Although drivers, who are members of the NURTW are mostly at the receiving end of police corruption and extortion, the union as an association of commercial drivers has not mount any 'serious' formal campaign against the act. As the response from the drivers interviewed revealed many of them (the drivers) do not believe that such actions would produce the desire effect of curbing extortion of drivers by the police.

While it can be argued that the drivers and their union had no choice than to comply with the demands made by the police since as agents of government the police have monopoly over the instruments of violence and the discretion to decide whether or not the law has been violated. Responses gathered from the drivers revealed that many of the drivers including their union (NURTW) have no qualms about paying bribes or giving in to extortion by police officers. As business men the money they are to pay to the police at checkpoints on the highway has been added to the cost of doing business. The implication of this is that the burden of payment will be transferred to the passengers, who will pay a fraction more as transport fees than they are to do, if the police do not make such demands (this is particularly true of inter- state drivers). Therefore the police take bribes and extort drivers not only because they deal with a part of the population that is vulnerable to law violation and had no qualms about paying bribes, when caught, but also because the police know that they can get away with any corrupt act, since no policeman has ever been convicted of soliciting for bribe or extorting drivers on the roads.

In the course of the study, it was discovered that every driver is made to pay average of #50 at every police checkpoints (which we estimated at 4-7 checkpoints per trip). This amount in itself

is small even when it is calculated as #200 - #350 by each driver per trip. A holistic view of police extortion of drivers reveals the extractive nature (in terms of money) of this type of corruption. To drive home this point, in Oyo state alone there are 33 NURTW chapters spread across the thirty-three local governments. With an average of ten commercial bus parks per chapter, there will be a total average of 330 parks. If at each of these parks just ten buses leave the park daily and each of the driver was to pay #200 per trip (assuming only four police checkpoints exist) this means that a total of 3300 drivers travelling to various destinations both within and outside of Oyo state pay #660000 (six hundred and sixty thousand Naira) daily to the personnel of the Nigeria police force. The implication of this is that annually the commercial bus drivers in Oyo state alone pay a sum of #240900000 (two hundred and forty million, nine-hundred thousand, naira) to personnel of Nigeria police through extortion alone!

To curb and prevent police extortion (and corruption) it would be unreasonable to expect just the police institution alone to fight the war against corruption, since its personnel are the beneficiary of the proceeds of corruption. There is the need for Civil Society Organisations, particularly the Nation Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) to launch campaign against extortion and other forms of police corruption by exercising an informal form of police oversight- creating a platform that will make it possible for the police to be held accountable for corruption.

## Conclusion

Modern corruption is clearly observable in urban centres, as it is stimulated and natured in centres of extensive, commercial, industrial and bureaucratic activities (Eker, 1981).<sup>15</sup> The transport business being one of such commercial activities provides a breeding ground for police corruption. The corrupt policeman (men) posted to checkpoints see(s) the commercial

---

<sup>15</sup> Eker, Varda. "On the origins of corruption: Irregular incentives in Nigeria." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 19, no. 1 (1981): 173-182.

bus drivers as business men with money and tried to get something from them in cash or kind through any means necessary. Drivers in their bid to avoid unnecessary delays or other “illegal punishment” for not yielding to extortion pay money to the police, thus becoming the “supplier” in the “demand – supply” act of corruption that define police check point and roadblocks in Nigeria.

Being “sympathetic” “friendly” and “nice” are some of the qualities that we value as individuals in our daily interactions with people. Drivers as individuals also desired these qualities from the law enforcement officials they come in contact with everyday. The problem with this expectation is that a policeman that is described by drivers as “sympathetic” or “nice” is most likely to be the one that usually fails to apply the full weight of the law when law has been violated. It does not matter whether the policeman has made demand for bribes or not. The driver who has err the law recognized and appreciate these qualities (of letting him go) and reward the policeman for his “kind” gesture. Therefore this social mechanism of corruption makes it difficult for actors involved in it to regard it as something bad since such action can be rationalized as a moral conduct of “helping” out another person in need of “help”.

Police corruption continues to be the main feature at checkpoints and roadblocks on the highways and within the cities not only because of social norms such as the culture of gift-giving embedded in our culture but also because the practice has a long history. To many of the drivers interviewed extortion (and bribery) has always been the “modus operandi” of the police since they started driving commercially and they have become used to the idea of police asking (or begging) for money. All these make acts of corruption to be perceived as a “normal occurrence” that forms part of everyday interaction with the police (legitimizing corruption) and to be tolerated when drivers become the victims of extortion and corruption.

Corruption (not minding its various forms) according to Amundsen (1999) can be challenged from four sources: from the outside (from the external world) from above (by the leadership) from inside (within the administrative and bureaucratic institutions) and from below (from the civil society, business

community and each citizens standing alone). The war against corruption in Nigeria has mainly been waged by the leadership (from above), the administrative and bureaucratic institution like EFCC and ICPC set up to fight corruption and to some extent by collaboration with international organizations. Police corruption (as witness at police checkpoints) as a form of petty corruption has its source both from within the police agency in Nigeria and from the drivers. To tackle police corruption there is the need for joint collaboration between the Nigeria Police Force and the NURTW, the umbrella body of commercial bus drivers. It is this lack of joint collaborative effort against corruption that makes corruption to fester.

### Bibliography

Agbibo, Daniel Egiegba. "Between corruption and development: The political economy of state robbery in Nigeria." *Journal of business ethics* 108, no. 3 (2012): 325-345.

Balboa, Jenny, and Erlinda M. Medalla. "Anti-corruption and governance: The Philippine experience." In *APEC Study Center Consortium Conference*, pp. 1-28. 2006.

Amundsen, Inge. *Political corruption: An introduction to the issues*. Chr. Michelsen Institute, 1999.

Bratsis, Peter. "Corrupt compared to what? Greece, capitalist interests, and the specular purity of the state." (2003).

Eker, Varda. "On the origins of corruption: Irregular incentives in Nigeria." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 19, no. 1 (1981): 173-182.

Hills, Alice. "The dialectic of police reform in Nigeria." *The journal of modern African studies* (2008): 215-234.

Lawson, Letitia. "The politics of anti-corruption reform in Africa." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (2009): 73-100.

Olagoke, Olakunle O. "The extra-territorial scope of the anti-corruption legislation in Nigeria." *Int'l Law*. 38 (2004): 71.

De Sardan, JP Olivier. "A moral economy of corruption in Africa?." *Journal of Modern African Studies* (1999): 25-52.

Osoba, Segun O. "Corruption in Nigeria: historical perspectives." *Review of African Political Economy* 23, no. 69 (1996): 371-386.

Pierce, Steven. "Looking like a state: colonialism and the discourse of corruption in Northern Nigeria." *Comparative studies in society and history* 48, no. 4 (2006): 887-914.

Roebuck, Julian B., and Thomas Barker. "A typology of police corruption." *Social problems* 21, no. 3 (1974): 423-437.

Rose-Ackerman, Susan. "Corruption." In *Readings in public choice and constitutional political economy*, pp. 551-566. Springer, Boston, MA, 2008.

Rose-Ackerman, Susan. "Corruption and development." *PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC POLICY-NEW YORK* 117 (2006): 289.

Sisk, David E. "Police corruption and criminal monopoly: Victimless crimes." *The Journal of Legal Studies* 11, no. 2 (1982): 395-403.

Suberu, R. T., and R. I. Rotberg. "The travails of Nigeria's anti-corruption crusade." *Corruption, global security, world order* (2009): 260-282.

Smith, Daniel Jordan. "Everyday Corruption and the State: Citizens and Public Officials in Africa." (2009): 408-411.

Smith, Daniel Jordan. "The paradoxes of popular participation in corruption in Nigeria." *Corruption, Global Security, and World Order* (2009): 283-309.

Umam, Ahmad Khoirul.  
"Paradoks Demokratisasi dan Liberalisasi Pasar terhadap Gerakan Anti-Korupsi di Negara Berkembang." *Global South Review* 1, no. 1: 45-62.

Tanzi, Vito. "Corruption around the world: Causes, consequences, scope, and cures." *Staff papers* 45, no. 4 (1998): 559-594.

Tignor, Robert L. "Political corruption in Nigeria before independence." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 31, no. 2 (1993): 175-202.

Under kuffler, Laura S. *Captured by evil: the idea of corruption in law*. Yale University Press, 2013.