

Anti-Corruption in Nigeria: Towards a Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This paper makes a case for discursive analysis of anticorruption in Nigeria. It argues for an alternative understanding of anti/corruption discourse by examining anticorruption as a discourse shrouded in a complex inter-related process shaped by socio-historical continuities, meaning-making, interests, perceptions and interpretations that (inter)act to impel, and sometimes propel, anticorruption to produce contradictory outcomes. Without impugning on the strides of government, through the efforts of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), in the fight against corruption, this piece interrogates why anticorruption campaign appears to have little or no impact in its fight against corruption in Nigeria and argues it is not unconnected with emphasis on institutions as against interests and meaning-making processes that goes into the making of 'institutions'. It contends that emphasis on institutions in the campaign against corruption loses sight of and does not take into account what corruption is, what it portends, and whether its re/presentation captures or reflects the needs, views and experience of the society. Grounded in postcolonialism and relying on extant literature on (anti)corruption in Nigeria, this study deploys critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how the discourse of (anti)corruption in Nigeria is generating a social process of anticorruption with (un)intended consequences.

Keywords: Corruption, Anticorruption, Critical Discourse Analysis, Postcolonialism, Institutionalism

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1. Introduction

From a poststructuralist standpoint, and particularly postcolonialism, this piece engages with corruption and anticorruption as social constructs. Corruption is a socially and historically structured category, much like democracy, development and good governance; it is shaped both by political and personal struggles and power relations in a continuing process. Current effort at combating corruption is not unconnected to Nigeria's historical past and to better understand anti-corruption, we examine how the phenomenon has been understood in Nigeria, how it has evolved through social, structural, and institutional arrangements, and how these understanding affect anticorruption efforts. Our aim therefore, is not a didactic or prescriptive research; it is not an expose of the 'evils' of corruption, neither does it seek to point to moral lapses inherent and or absent in certain cultures, draw a rigid line between private and public realms, nor suggest the possibility of sudden appearance of effective institutions to mitigate cultural influences and curb intrusion of private interests in public spaces. Neither is the intent to condemn or speak ill of anticorruption efforts in Nigeria. Rather, we seek to explore how meanings embedded in notions of corruption and the interpretations they elicit interact to articulate, and often, complicate and compromise (political outcomes of) institutions of society. By examining the texts, discursive practices and social processes of anticorruption in Nigeria, we hope to unearth new insights on corruption, and the inertia in anti-corruption efforts, especially in developing societies. The central objective is to understand why anticorruption campaign in Nigeria appears to be dysfunctional or how the buzz about anticorruption had not led measurably towards less incidence of political corruption in the country.

Anticorruption in Nigeria appears to replicate a pattern that protects certain interests while prosecuting others. Expectedly, scholars hold different views on anticorruption campaign in Nigeria. It has been viewed as a struggle against establishment (Adebanwi, 2007, 2012) and interpreted as elite struggle to outwit one another (Lawson, 2009), yet others interpret it as projecting petty corruption as synonymous to political corruption (Obadare, 2007; Mathew et al., 2013). Rather than curbing corruption, threat of prosecution appears to reinforce networks of patronage and clientelism (Obadare, 2007), while anti-corruption campaign itself "seems more or less an unprecedented theft of state resource" (Adebanwi and Obadare, 2011: 187). In this sense, Nuhu Ribadu's (former Chairman of EFCC) submission becomes instructive when he notes that, "the policy today in Nigeria is to use all the rhetoric – speaking of the need for the rule of law and the fight against corruption – to cover-up their real campaign to and so thoroughly confuse corruption and anti-corruption that no one can sort out which is which any longer (Ribadu, 2009: 5).

Following this introduction, this study is structured into five sections. The first section situates the study in postcolonialism as a broad theoretical commentary on politics. The second makes a brief on the genealogy of

anticorruption efforts in Nigeria and a quick expose on the state-of-the-art of anticorruption crusade in Nigeria. This is followed by an examination of the institutionalists' argument to combating corruption. This section problematizes institutionalist approach to anticorruption, arguing that while institutions are important, they do not in themselves constitute a veritable explanation to why policy outcomes differ. The fourth section presents and makes a case for anticorruption as a discourse. It situates the understanding of anticorruption as a social process that draws its meaning and consequence from texts, discursive practice and social process. It also explicates on five common characteristics central to foregrounding CDA as a critical analysis of corruption. The fifth and final section provides insight to some key concepts considered invaluable to understanding Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis.

2. Theoretical Framework

Postcolonialism as a theory combines with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an analytical framework form the basis of analysis in this study. Postcolonialism is adopted as a meta-theoretical guide examining present models of politics, economy, and ethics (Grovogui, 2013: 264) to interrogate the limits of self-determination imposed on previously colonised societies holding on to, without critical interrogation of, dominant models of development. A common thread in postcolonial (and its more sophisticated form, Decolonial) readings is that, regardless of formal severance of colonialism, all postcolonial societies, to a large extent, are in one way or another still subject to covert, subtle and neo- forms of colonialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2022, 2015 2013; Fasakin, 2022; Sakue-Collins, 2021, 2017; Mendoza 2016; Nabudere, 2011; Mignolo, 2009; Quijano, 2000) . The contention is that though colonialism ended, it did not end coloniality. Some of its major exponents are Edward Said (1978), Homi Bhabha (1994), Bill Ashcroft (1995, 2006), Achille Mbembe (2010), Dani W. Nabudere (2011) Sabi N. Grovogui (2013) and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021, 2020, 2015).

Besides the broad consensus that the current reality of the post-colony draws heavily from the pool of, and cannot be dissociated from, her colonial past, two things stand out: colonialism ended but its life-force, coloniality, did not end and, those who displaced and replaced the colonisers merely took on the ideals and continued with the systems of disarticulation. Thus, subsisting in the post-colony are "long-standing patterns of power which redefine culture, labour, common sense, knowledge and aspiration of the self in ways that accredit superiority to the colonisers" and uncritical reliance on Western claim to universalism (Mendoza, 2016: 114).

As a body of knowledge, postcolonialism rejects rationalists and humanists claim to universal knowledge, especially where such claim is rooted in Eurocentrism as possessing the finest forms of reason. It maintains that the continuing articulation of coloniality is embedded in language as the basic medium through which hierarchies are created, recreated, reinforced and, by which power is stylized and preserved in order to make conceptions and notions of reality acceptable and established (Ashcroft et al., 2006; Grovogui, 2013). At the core of the theory is the belief that much of the continuing effects colonialism such as corruption and stagnated development are result of failure of postcolonial elites to sever colonial lactation and evolve organic policies, programmes and institutions that speak directly to postcolonial challenges and transform colonial signs into postcolonial significations.

Postcolonialism contends that there is often a gap of misreading between what is said (to be) and what happens and that this can be understood frequently by critically examining how (neo)colonial structures shape postcolonial policies and institutions through language. It holds an intricate relationship between knowledge (i.e., of one's world), language (its articulation) and representation (i.e., how the social world works). It emphasises language as a fundamental site for struggle in the creation of truth and construction of social reality. Language, knowledge, power, representation, resistance, etc., are key concepts identified as invaluable to understanding the nexus between coloniality and (un)development.

It is against this background, this study evokes postcolonialism to examine the reproduction of coloniality arguing that anticorruption, beginning with its etiology, appears more or less ideological; simultaneously combating and re-enacting corruption in Nigeria. The increasing chasm between the letters and proclamations of anticorruption, its discursive practice, and practical outcome suggest a disconnection between policy proclamation and social practice; and, that this 'gap' reflects failure of postcolonial elites to pursue policies of self-determination poised to freeing the post-colony from internal and external subjection. Thus, alongside postcolonialism, the study employs a framework that offers systematic deconstruction and analysis of language as building block of social reality, CDA.

3. Genealogy of Anti-Corruption Effort in Nigeria

Corruption is not new to recorded human history; it dates back to the fourth century B. C. (Bardhan, 1997) and subsists in all society to a much or lesser degree (Mathew *et al.*, 2013; Sowunmi *et al.*, 2010; Andvig *et al.*, 2000), with endemic corruption adjudged as characteristic of poorly functioning societies (Mathew *et al.*, 2013; Agbibo, 2012; Chabal and Daloz, 1999). However, the turn of the millennium has witnessed large-scale transnational corruption scandals such as Enron, Halliburton and Siemens compelling even the most

unsuspecting observer to relinquish passivity and take active stance against the phenomenon. The result is the rise in global initiatives and efforts to combat corruption. From the establishment of Transparency International in 1993, the World Bank's Anti-Corruption Strategy in 1997, the OECD's Convention on Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in 1997 to the United Nation's Convention Against Corruption in 2003, corruption has been acknowledged as a "global epidemic" (Klitgarrd, 1988: 21) and "world evil" (Nooman, 1984: 235) that must be rid of. To this end, anti-corruption has gradually assumed a status of 'global governance', involving standardized regulations and requiring ratification from national governments in order to nib corruption, in the bud, at domestic levels (Husted, 2002; Schmidt, 2007; Argandona, 2007).

However, dealing with corruption have proved not only to be dynamic and complicated, but also shrouded in struggles, conflict of interests, and contradictions owing from, but not limited to, different understanding of the phenomenon, how it is to be tackled, who is most suitable to tackle it (i.e. local vs. international actors), etc. Some scholars are of the view that corruption is a socially constructed phenomenon (Gupta, 1999, 2005; Haller and Shore, 2005; Granovetter, 2007) and, as such, one way of better tackling it, is evolving a social consciousness reflecting moral indignation of the social context from which it emanates (Sampson, 2005). In Nigeria, with the return of civil rule in 1999, the Federal Government of Nigeria responded to the imperative of combating political corruption. In his inaugural speech in 1999, former President Olusegun Obasanjo averred to the ubiquity of corruption. A situation he lamented is so perverse that citizens have to bribe officials of government ministries and parastatals, and even parastatals and ministries have to bribe one another for the release of their statutory allocation of funds (Vanguard, May 30, 1999).

As hydra-headed as the Obasanjo's speech appears, one thing that is relatively outstanding is the acknowledgement of corruption as a serious political malaise and this, however, sets the back-drop upon which Nigeria's current quest to confront corruption as a stumbling block to the country's development formally began. This political declaration was immediately accompanied by action, the establishment and subsequent enactment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Act. However, before the EFCC, there has been several other policies and initiatives to ensure the effective functioning of the state. Mathew *et al.* (2013) provided a long list of agencies and initiativesⁱ, preceding the EFCC, including the Criminal Code and the Penal Code, all of which have provisions dealing with corruption albeit in limited forms. Osita Ogbu (2008) argues that while the contents of the Criminal Code are so technical and complicated so that an otherwise guilty person can normally escape punishment, the Penal Code, on the other hand, is more lucid, less technical, but infinitely limited in scope. He submits that, both Codes "contain glaring inadequacies" that renders them ineffectual to current times (*ibid*: 103). Similarly, it has been observed that, while the Criminal and Penal Codes could complement and be used to supplement each other, the current manifestations of political corruption extend beyond the purview of existing laws (Aigbovo and Atsegbua, 2012; Odusote, 2013).

Nevertheless, the EFCC was mandated to enforce all hitherto laws on corruption and other related offences with a view of, in theory, mitigating the real threat of political corruption as more imminent compared to petty corruption (Sowunmi *et al.*, 2010; Mathew *et al.*, 2013). In light of the foregoing, we seek to examine how the texts of corruption as contained in the various legal and legislative instruments interact with the discursive practice of anticorruption in Nigeria. Paying attention to the texts, the meanings they embed and the interpretations they are given through discursive practice would furnish a better understanding of the social processes of anticorruption.

3.1 *The State-of-the-Art of Anti-Corruption in Nigeria*

From the 'missing \$2.8 billion of Obasanjo's military era in the '80s, where a panel of enquiry was set up by Shagari's led Second Republic and dissolved by Buhari's military regime with the verdict that "No money is missing"; the infamous \$180 Halliburton/KBR bribery scandal and "disappearance of \$12 billion oil windfall" (Adebanwi and Obadare, 2011: 190) during Ibrahim Babangida's regime, where several prominent Nigerians have been indicted on the foreign side of the investigation but no Nigerian has been arrested or prosecuted till date; the Siemens telecommunication scandal of approximately \$12.7 million in bribes, in the 2000s (Huffington Post, 2007; Ribadu, 2009), through; the CBN's (Central Bank of Nigeria) alert of "missing \$20 billion" during Goodluck Jonathan's administration, where conflicting and fluctuating figures kept emerging and eventually, 'ignored', to; the 'Dasukigate' arms deal scandal where Sambo Dasuki, the then National Security Adviser, had allegedly disbursed \$2.9 billion meant to combat insurgency which found its way to bank accounts of several individuals for private ends, and several cascading events, the narratives are all too familiar – tales of corruption without corrupt individuals. With the exception of 'Dasukigate' that is still unfolding, these cases capture Nigeria's anti-corruption climate: buzz about corruption, corruption cases, but no corrupt individuals.

Taken into historical perspective, from 1960 to 1999, officials of the Nigerian state had stolen over \$440 billion, that is, equivalent of six Marshal Plans (Ribadu, 2009: 2; Adebanwi, 2011: 191) and the Global Financial Integrity (GFI) shows a steady rise of corruption in Nigeria from 2004 to 2013, with an estimated \$157 billion siphoned within the past decade (GFI, 2014). Transparency International (TI) corroborates this with its 2014

survey showing that 85% of Nigerians believe corruption has been on the increase (TI Country Report, 2013), yet there is scarcely evidence of, or cases of prosecution, or people being held liable for these rapes against the state notwithstanding anticorruption campaign.

The Nigerian state has responded to these developments with several policies and agencies, foremost of which is the EFCC. It was mandated to prevent and investigate corrupt practices while working the related agencies and institutions (Odusote, 2013; Sowunmi *et al.*, 2010; Ogbu, 2008). Though, its emergence on Nigeria's anticorruption landscape has been variously interpreted as an, instrument of intimidation to coerce opposition, enforce conformity (Inokoba and Ibegu, 2011), ensnare civil society (Agbibo 2012), imposition on the government by the IFIs (Oke, 2014: 56; cf. HRW, 2011; Adabanwi, 2013), and deliberate design to cajole the IFIs and widow-dressing to redeem Nigeria's rising image of notoriety (Lawson, 2009: 83; Obuah, 2010: 25; cf. Adebani and Obadare, 2011), corruption appears obstinate nonetheless. So how is the meaning and interpretation of corruption reflected in texts vis-à-vis the discursive practice of anticorruption thus far?

On the one hand, scholars have indexed how in Nigeria, several corruption cases have been struck out of court for lack of 'evidence' and accused persons acquitted on grounds of 'failure' on the part of prosecution to demonstrate, through legal technicalities, how illicit and undocumented wealth corresponds to corrupt enrichment of political officeholders. Odusote (2013) and Oke (2014) concur with Onuoha that such technicalities are deliberate design so "that otherwise guilty persons [can] normally escape punishment" (2008: 103). Legal technicalities notwithstanding, there are circumstances where the laws are either silent, inadequate and, at times, completely alien to the subject-matter under its consideration (Ogbu, 2008; Odusote, 2013), and, oftentimes, court's outright refusal to apply the doctrine of *suo motu*, that is, to act on its own motion (or initiative), even when there is glaring evidence of inexplicable enrichment (Onuoha, 2008: 114; cf. Odusote, 2013: 140). What this suggests is there appears to be a disconnection in the texts of 'corruption' i.e., what is written, what is done, and what is interpreted.

On the other hand, scholars oriented toward neo-patrimonialism have argued that inertia in anticorruption effort is due to entrenched systems of clientelism, prebendalism and god-fatherism (Joseph, 1987), personal rule (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994, 1997) and politics of the belly (Baayart, 1999). Here, the defining factor undermining anticorruption is to be located in the patron-client relationship underlying public institutions. Rothstein and Tegnhammar (2006) argue that in societies drenched in systemic corruption, there exists a network of relationships consisting of individuals ranging from ordinary citizens to politicians, from civil servants to public sector managers, among others, who are connected and bond by the cord of corruption. The implication of this is that to expect institutions to function perfectly without blemish is to assume they will be run by aliens. Yet, some others view anticorruption campaign in Nigeria as interposition of hegemonic self-interests (Agbibo, 2012: 127; cf. Oke, 2014; Erdmann and Engel, 2007; Karklins, 2002; Reno, 1995) and design to mollify donor agencies (Routley, 2015; Lawson, 2009).

Nevertheless, recently, President Muhammad Buhari notes that interpreting the laws on corruption is a major obstacle to anticorruption in Nigeria. He states that, among other things, the judiciary is the main headache and stumbling block in Nigeria's fight against corruption (Nigerian Tribune, January 31st 2016). This echoes Odusote (2013) assertion that the inertia in anticorruption in Nigeria is due to ineptitude of the judiciary and its "unwillingness to key-in into government's anticorruption efforts (Odusote, 2013: 125; cf. Ogbu, 2008; Okonkwo, 2002; Oko, 2002). Corruption thus appears to connote pretty different things across board and thereby eliciting differing response from different segments of society. However, at every turn, there appears to be apparent disconnect on what corruption represents and the discursive practice of anticorruption. In the face of these developments, the process of anticorruption in Nigeria opens a vicissitude of interpretations as to what constitute corruption and what forms of articulation represents legitimate and acceptable norms countervailing it.

4. Anticorruption and Institution

In this section we seek to participate in, as part of, a broad spectrum of debate on one major canon of anticorruption, that is, the efficacy of and emphasis on institutions over individuals in the determination of political outcomes in society (Fournier and Grey, 2000; Simmons, Mills and Mills, 2005). For institutionalist, anticorruption is a simple and straightforward process. So, how do we address corruption in societies where it has proven to be systemic? Most anticorruption literature has mainly focused on the structural aspect and not the processes that actually drive the structures (Rothstein and Tegnhammar, 2006). For instance, Alence (2004: 163) suggests that by enhancing electoral competition will lead to credibility and accountability while promoting institutional checks will serve to curtail executive power" corruption will be reduced, while William Easterly suggests that "[f]irst, set up quality institutions...[s]econd, establish policies that eliminate incentives for corruption" (2001: 252) and corruption will find its way. Alence's position is clearly of the democratisation school, that is, liberal democracy counters corruption. This theory however has little empirical evidence to support it as so-called democracies are not immune from the phenomenon under investigation (Rothstein and Tegnhammar, 2006).

A variant of this institutional-fix school of thought is the dominant understanding in politics that corruption is caused by deficiencies in political systems and particularly, “democratic deficit” (Andvig 2007: 52). The argument is that there is a causal relationship between power-sharing formulas, checks and balances, accountable and transparent institutions, transparent and standardised procedures, and good governance on the one hand, and political outcome – bad governance, poorly functioning state, and widespread corruption, on the other hand (Hope, 2000; Andvig, 2007; Amundsen *et al.*, 2000). Like democratic peace theory, it holds that as democracy increases and consolidates so the level corruption decreases and dissipates (Andvig, 2007: 57). In other words, when power is democratised and held among a vast body of institutions, corruption invariably decreases. To this end, it can be safely concluded therefore that, corrupt political systems can “only be reversed by democratising the state” (Andvig, 2007; cf. Friedrich, 1989).

Scholars are however, divided on this postulation since there are contrary evidences, and thus, Andvig (2007) argues that a more refined ‘theory’ will hold this relationship as bell-shaped, instead of linear. These studies nonetheless, tended to focus more on the formal democratic structures and institutions of political systems. Thus, reforming or strengthening of democratic institutions such as parliaments, judiciaries, civil society, media, public opinion, and other specialised agencies would reverse the tide of corruption. Conversely, non-democratic systems or authoritarian regimes tend to produce high levels of corruption (Amundsen, 1999). However, this understanding of corruption, corruptibility and anticorruption is analytically less robust. Its thesis has been contested as lacking empirical basis and, where they exist, the evidences are inconclusive (Amundsen *et al.*, 2000: 57; cf. Jain, 2001; Treisman, 2003; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006).

Mungiu-Pippidi (2006) argues that most definitions and conception of corruption downplay the effect of history on the evolution of institutions across different societies. Mungiu-Pippidi (2006) contention is that historical review of literature reveals that up until modern times, it is scarce to find, and where it exists, only relative few, societies with clearly delineated public and private spheres and where government, functioning in public sphere alone, provides for equal welfare of all citizens. Corruption, for her, needs to be understood in historic-specific context where a society’s stage of development is invaluable in that consideration. Meaning, there are no absolutes or universals when it comes to norms relating to corruption (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006: 87). She asserts that attempts to locate corruption in the processes of modernisation and democratisation will necessarily miss the point. She contends that, prior to modernisation, there were only a pocket of instances where universal delivery of public good by the state was the norm. What this implies is that there is limit to which the application of public-private dichotomy or moral-immoral divide since different societies have different encounters and experiences, and more so because these experiences impact differently on the operation of governance and political outcomes. Several empirical studies have already demonstrated that there is a logical relationship between the evolution of a country’s political institutions and the quality of its output (Mauro, 1995; Rose-Ackerman and Kornai, 2004; Easterly, 2001, 2006), so that political outcomes cannot be conveniently treated with disregard to how institutions draw on one another interdiscursively. Therefore, what is important to note is that, in a polity that is characteristically corrupt, new institutions have the proclivity to rejuvenate corrupt practices than mitigate it.

Reno William’s (1995) study of corruption in Sierra Leone demonstrates that patron-client network is an interposition of colonial regimes to expedite colonial authority. It highlighted how patron-client relationship was introduced to scuttle hitherto power relations. William (1995) argues that this basic method of rule during colonial period was not significantly altered after independence but rather, continues through ‘national’ governments with the view of legitimising their authority through chiefs and local representatives (William, 1995). It is a difficult line of argument that the problem of corruption is a result of weak or underdeveloped bureaucracy. Rather, the legacy of authoritarian rule bequeathed at the eve of decolonisation couple with military rule helped built bureaucracies that are anything but weak. Authoritarian rule in most of these (developing) societies helped built powerful bureaucracies with capacity to augment, aggrandise and utilise resources meant for society for the personal interest of officeholders. Thus, the issue is not about weak or underdeveloped institutions but rather too powerful and over bloated bureaucracy that has held, and still holds sway, the entire society.

What is instructive in William’s work is not simply the interposition of colonial archetypes designed to maintain control and domination then, but it illuminates on the in-built motif that necessitates and sustains such institutions in contemporary times. In other words, post-independence, regimes emerging after independence, draw heavily, interdiscursively, from its predecessor with the consequence of furthering similar political outcome even though it espouses formal regime discontinuation. Similarly, Mungiu-Pippidi (2006) observes that in former British colonies, even where formal democratic institutions were bequeathed, “regimes developed that were even less concerned with public welfare than the traditional ones had been” (2006: 89) with a view of upholding new hierarchies of power and sustaining specific patterns of sociopolitical outcome.

The point is, besides postcolonial lactations suggestive of dependency arguments; analysis on the evolution of democratic institutions carries within it an implicit system of ‘dependence’, either through appropriation,

abrogation, or a combination of both in a more or lesser degree, that is often-taken-for-granted. This 'dependence' features prominently in postcolonial societies, except where there is a radical departure or disconnection from the past, and scholars critical of institutionalist approach have termed it path-dependency. Pierson Paul (2004: 64) illustrates path-dependency thus: "initial steps in a particular direction may encourage further movement along the same path. Over time, roads not chosen may become increasingly distant, increasingly unreachable alternatives". This logic, read conversely, points to the inherent limitation in institutional-fix approach to the problems of corruption, especially where how current discourse draws on previous discourses is not taken into consideration. Accordingly, Robert Harris applied similar logic to point to an often-ignored inbuilt inertia in institution-building as a panacea for curbing corruption. He argues that, just the same way a non-corrupt system is likely to automatically self-adjust to deal with corrupt individuals and whatever flaws that might have facilitated their emergence, so also will a corrupt system is inclined to automatically self-adjust to accommodate any purge and maintain the (corrupt) system (Harris, 2003: 63).

Note that the result is the emergence of new institutions - institutions with inbuilt inertia. What this suggests is that institution, on its own, does not mean anything but derives meaning from the discourses that generates it. Therefore, inquiring into the discursive processes: the making and functioning of institutions will shed light not only on the sequencing of institutions but by the same token, the self-regenerating or self-reinforcing patterns that appears to sustain corruption. As Rothstein and Tegnhammar put it, "the knowledge of which type of institutional systems that co-varies with low corruption is certainly important but leaves questions about agency, strategy and sequencing unanswered" (2006: 12). Thus, while new institutions might be necessary to address the shortcomings of old ones, and new laws might be necessary to intervene where old ones prove obsolete, understanding how new laws and institutions draw on already existing ones is instructive to the discursive and social practice emanating from them.

Nonetheless, there are several conceptual problems with focusing only on the implementation of anticorruption policies and however, one stands out: empirical evidence reveals that institutions do not exist in an independent plane of their own. They are driven by humans and predominantly path-dependent (Andvig *et al.*, 2000; Paul, 2004; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006; Rothstein and Tegnhammar, 2006). Over the years, it has been argued that analysing the state and prescribing a one-size-fit-all remedy is analytically impoverishing (Gupta, 2005; Haller and Shore, 2005). Accordingly, theorising the political state as a unilineal and monolithic entity has been challenged as being stereotypical and insufficient to understanding the complex constellation of mutually reinforcing entities, interests, relationships and patterns (Abrams, 2006; Sharma and Gupta, 2006; Ferguson, 2014). Studies have shown how struggle for change and continuity (Adebanwi, 2012), intra-elite struggle for control of power (Lawson, 2009) and how competition between civil societies and across different social domains complicate anticorruption in Nigeria (Routley, 2015).

Different perspectives notwithstanding, the common denominator is that, institutions do not run themselves; rather, individuals do. Institutions do not exist in an independent plane, neither are they fixed or stable entities, but rather they are socially and discursively structured and the individuals are at the heart of these discursive processes. From the conceptualisation of corruption, its definition, and de/limitations, to the institutions designed to mitigate it are but meaning-making processes shaped by and, in turn, being shaped by discourses. To this end, this study is motivated to comprehend anticorruption as a social process resulting from the discursive practice of corruption. This does not in any way undermine the empirics of corruption and/or anticorruption as problematic of individual or social deviant behaviour, nor does it impugn on the eloquence of analyses on the lacuna of administrative and bureaucratic institutions, but rather examine the 'meaning-making-processes' of anticorruption and its outcome in society.

5. Anticorruption as Discourse

Critical discourse analysis (hereinafter CDA) emphasises an intricate connection between language, power and social problems. The social context within which language exists embeds within it power relations that create, shape, and determine political outcomes (Fairclough, 1989, 2003; Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002; Philips and Hardy, 2002; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). In other words, there is an intimate link between language use and broader societal practices. In this sense, anticorruption is considered not as an objective signification with independent existence, but rather, a socio-historical and continuing struggle over meaning and power. Anticorruption as articulated in the laws and policy instruments has intimate relationship with the broader social practices of anticorruption. This discursive focus of anticorruption shifts attention away from mere policy declarations and establishment of institutions to deemphasise the emphasis of anticorruption as fixed elaborate framework with live of its own. Rather, the contention is that discourses on corruption and anticorruption, do in fact, influence, amplify and even complicate social processes. Examining the subtleties of discourse illuminates how words, language and statements offer the means to meaning and how power relations are announced through social practice.

Thus, rather than focusing solely on institutions – which are mere representations – and the grand ideals

they proclaim to pursue, paying attention to language that spur them into existence and define their pursuits or discursive practices form the basis of discourse analysis. Here, Michel Foucault asserts that the idea is to focus on the intersection of power and intention, that is if there is one, to unearth its real effect in practical terms. Foucault argued that what is required is to study power at a point where it moves beyond its intention to a point where its external impact manifests. This, for him, is where power moves out of its cloak to directly impact on what can be provisionally referred to as “its object, its target, its field of application” is felt; where it mounts and fits itself in order to produces the real effects under its cloak as distinct from mere intent (Foucault, 1976: 97).

The meaning and understanding of corruption through textual representations cannot be dissociated from the interpretations and understanding that propel actors to different course of action. In discourse analysis, the meaning ascribed to a social phenomenon is important in the consideration of the role of that phenomenon in altering the social world. This way, before progressing into what discourse or discourses shape social phenomenon, discourse analysis begins with an examination of the meanings embedded in texts. According to Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 9), the meaning ascribed to texts and discursive events are not neutral but works to effect change in the world so that, the way a phenomenon is perceived and understood is linked to efforts mobilised towards dealing with or addressing it. Building on this understanding, we argue that the texts of anticorruption provide the raw material which generates and, as a result, constitutes the building blocks through which the social process of anticorruption is framed and social world transformed.

The case of James Ibori, for example, shows what texts embeds and how they are employed to, not only articulate and attend to alleged corruption in the polity, but also structure and shape the meaning agency and institutions build around it. The relationship with the texts and responses from the institutions not only speak of anticorruption, but may also contribute to attitudes and assumptions about corruption. They produce distinct modes or changes in conceptions of what is wrong and what is not, for instance. However, texts alone, on its own, might not be insightful of the agenda or meaning that lies beneath it, but taken together with the practices resulting from such texts underscore the intentionality of discourse (Phillips *et al.*, 2004).

According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), interactions of all kinds be they formal or informal, spoken or written, and in any setting are reflections of discourse. Thus, it is the contention here that any articulation of corruption or anticorruption, formal texts of all kinds, are intimately linked with (il)legitimacy and the myriad of sense-making processes that form the discursive practice of anticorruption in all part of the social process. Schuman (1995: 574) defines legitimacy as “a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within socially constructed systems of norms, values, beliefs and definitions”, so that defining corruption and combating corruption are one in the discursive struggle to delegitimise corruption and legitimise the outcome of anticorruption as a norm. Accordingly, the annunciation of these struggles and their articulations in different forms cannot be extemporised from their foundational units, texts. While most studies have focused on institutions and elite struggles as relevant ‘forces’ impelling the outcome of anticorruption, attention here is paid to how these struggles are embedded in the discourse of corruption. The point is, whatever becomes of anticorruption campaign cannot be ultimately distanced from what it presumed to constitute corruption, and the struggles resulting from it are not unconnected to interpretations of legitimacy (and or illegitimacy) and meaning-making in society.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) argue that discourse can be conceptualised as one of a number of elements present in social practice and interacting in a dialectical relationship, which enables critical analyses to expatiate beyond ordinary representations/significations in structuralist and interpretivist paradigms. This dialectical relationship in discourse, they contend, allows a shift in focus to elaborate not only on what discourse *represents*, but also, on what discourse *does*. More important to this study is the latter, that is, what discourse does. Focus on what the discourse of anticorruption in Nigeria *does* brings to the fore how, predominantly, state-sanctioned functions are subsumed by overt display of *what needs to be done* or *what will be done* through speech acts and declarations as opposed to *what is actually done*, or what Judith Butler (1990) have aptly termed “performativity” and explicated by Appadurai (1996). Accordingly, anticorruption appears to performs a discursive role in consummating what it seeks to regulate. What do the texts on corruption represents and what are the discursive practices arising from it? How do they draw from, or differ from other texts in the broader social domain such as crime? An examination of the textual representations of corruption and anticorruption from which the discursive practice of the latter rests, houses the potential to enrich our understanding of the broader social process of anticorruption in Nigeria.

5.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Anti/corruption

At this point, it is pertinent to point out that, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is usually employed to designate one of either context: (a) as a label to describe a collection of approaches as a broader movement within discourse analysis (DA) sharing certain characteristics, and (b) Norman Fairclough’s version within that broader movement, so that one can talk of Fairclough’s CDA or critical analysis (Fairclough 1995). However, within the CDA tradition, it is our contention that Fairclough’s provides the most advanced, sophisticated framework and

best suited for this study as it “consists of a set of philosophical premises, theoretical methods, methodological guidelines and specific techniques for [socio]linguistic analysis” (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 60). The above notwithstanding, CDA as a broad category share five common characteristics that are relevant to comprehending corruption as a discourse:

1. Language forms part of the discursive processes and structure of reality.

Language or linguistic discourse – texts (both spoken and written) is an invaluable component of how social reality is constituted. It is one among other social practices through which the social world is (re)produced, interpreted, appropriated and consumed (Fairclough, 2000). Thus, the constitution of the social world can be understood through linguistic and non-linguistic discourse. Accordingly, the goal of CDA here is to examine the linguistic dimension of the discourse of corruption as an embedded form of meaning-making-process and the social processes emanating from it (Fairclough, 1998, 2000; Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002).

2. Discourse acts and is acted upon.

Discourse as a form of social practice participates in shaping the world. Discourse does not only shapes, it is being shaped in turn by other social practices. This way, discourse functions in an intricately linked web of relationship with other dimension of life and these struggles contribute in shaping and reshaping of social structures, both as object and subject (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002: 62). Thus, CDA helps to examine the discourse of corruption as an active part of the discursive practice of anticorruption in Nigeria. Notions of corruption and anticorruption are considered as engaging in a discursive struggle, a dialectical relationship that not only determines, limits, delimits what corruption is and/or is not, but also shape the discursive practice and processes of anticorruption in Nigeria through time.

Fairclough (1992) argues that social structures are not independent, but forms part of, and delimits discursive practices and the extent to which the social processes around such discourses can extend. He observes that what constitutes social reality is not the result of free-flowing ideas dormant in people’s head but rather emanates from ideas that are acted upon in the form of social practice and in relation to social structures. This, for him, is the discursive constitution of society. We build on this idea to argue that anticorruption as an institution is not a mere reflection of sets of ideals to be pursued for its own sake. Rather, it is a concrete manifestation of the material reality of the constituent discourse, in this case – corruption, from which structures of anticorruption derive. Accordingly, anticorruption is understood here, not as a simple pursuit of abstract ideals, but as a socio-historical and continuing process whose insight is to be found in the discourse(s) that give rise to it. This way anticorruption does not exist in an independent plane of its own, rather it is a reflection of ingrained social ills as enunciated in its texts, from which its discursive practices is intricately linked to.

3. Empirical basis for linguistic analysis.

This is a key distinguishing feature of CDA. The emphasis is on a systematic and empirical analysis of language as quintessential to social interaction. Unlike Discursive Psychology (DP) which concerns itself with rhetoric and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's Discourse Analysis (DA) which does not concern itself with the empirics of language use, CDA engages with concrete linguistic texts. The intertextual nature of texts gives it a synchronic and historic connection that links one text to another, and different texts to each other over time (Bakhtin, 1986; Keenoy *et al.*, 1997), and a systematic examination of how texts link to each other to form discourse and discourses will be insightful to the functionality of anticorruption. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) asserted that utterances are only meaningful when they are put into specific context, not when left vague. And, that the meaning they convey necessarily conform to some conventions underlying their use as well as the cultural embedding, ideological undertone and historical context they derive from.

In other words, texts are not, and do not exist in isolation, but in relation to other texts; they are intertextually networked with other texts across time and space. However, the relationship or network of texts may take several forms: straightforward - as in newspaper article, drawing from previous texts to bring in new information; recontextualisation – that is, ideologically interpreted and/or deployed differently from its ‘original’ connotation to produce new meaning; performative – that is, radically interpreted beyond its stated function and purpose to reveal manipulative elements or obscurantism (Thomas, 2003).

4. The ideological function of discourse.

This feature links CDA to Marxian tradition; it retains part of the vestiges of Marxism to argue that discourse subjugates one social group to the others, and as such is ideological. Here, CDA acknowledges its 'critical' stance and directs research focus both to the discursive practices through which the social world is represented. It upholds the active role of discourse in advancing the interests of particular social groups over others. In other words, beyond the structuring and restructuring of the social world, discourse also function to further certain interests and this, CDA seeks to investigate systematically. Fairclough (1993) observes that at the core of CDA is keen interest to examine the opacity of power, its causality in practice in terms of determining between texts and discursive events, and how both links to cultural and social practices and processes. For him, CDA’s concern is to unearth and demystify the relationships between discourse and society, and how these relationships serve or play crucial role in perpetuating power and maintaining hegemony in society (Fairclough, 1993: 135).

This critical aspect of CDA seeks to unearth the embeddedness of unequal power relations in discursive practices and how it participates in the determination and maintenance of the extant order. Accordingly, CDA offers the theoretical lens to systematically examine the discursive presentation and representation of corruption in public life; the incidences of corruption at different times and in different contexts; the relationship of these incidences to broader socio-cultural structures as well as efforts mobilised at addressing them; and, how these processes are shaped and are in turn shaped by power struggles and its role in determining anticorruption climate.

5. Critical Research.

This draws directly from CDA's concern with the ideological role of discourse (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Like Richardson (2007), the assumption here is that every aspect of textual analysis, from content to way of describing the content, action or process, is the result of choices over others. Thus, CDA acknowledges itself as a 'critical' analysis that is not politically apolitical. Rather, CDA is politically interested in the discourse that forms its research focus and committed to unearthing the hidden meanings and power relations embedded in discourse, especially as it gives rise to discursive practices.

Here, critical discourse analysis, unlike positivist social science would claim, does not lay claim of being politically neutral. Rather, it sees its being critical to means at least two things; as a critique it "aims to uncover the role of discursive practice in the maintenance of unequal power relations" which at once aligns it to the side of oppressed and marginalised social groups and, as such, is "politically committed to social change" in society (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002: 64). What this means is that critical attitude is appropriated to critique and interrogate the discursive practice of anticorruption. The primary concern here is to draw attention to the role of discourse in the determination of political outcomes. Thus, anticorruption efforts in Nigeria devoid of its socio-historical discursive processes might be merely sustaining and reproducing the status quo, putting up a show of some sort, a charade or window-dressing, and or simply advancing a different agenda altogether.

6. Norman Fairclough's CDA and Anti-Corruption

Every social phenomenon embodies an instance of language and in CDA; this is examined at three discursive levels. Norman Fairclough (1992: 73) provides three dimensional models to this effect; they are text, discursive practice and social process (Fairclough, 1992). Though, Fairclough notes that an examination of discourse as a text inevitably leads to its examination as a discursive practice, Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 68) observe that the components "should be separated analytically". For Fairclough (1992), discourse is primarily tripartite and consists of any one or combination of a piece of text, a discursive practice, and or social process. This tripartite view of discourse moves beyond the initial locus of language to highlight three dimensions which, when taken together, bridges the gap between texts and their real effects in society. The 'text' dimension relates to analysis of language use; composition, structure, syntax, etc., and how it is employed. The 'discursive practice' dimension relates to the specific nature of processes underlying text production, interpretation and manifestation. For instance, it concerns what type of discourse a given text under review draw from or draw upon. This includes discourses in the broader social and theoretical sense, and how they combine to form narrative, referenced in relation to other texts and or articulated to make meaning. This concern for intertextuality, and whether a text draws from broader social context, is what Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 81) refers to as "interdiscursivity". The third dimension, 'social process', concerns itself with issues such as the institutional and organisational circumstances underlying discursive events and how they shape, propel, and impel social practice as both constitutive and constituted elements.

Appropriating Fairclough's framework, anticorruption in Nigeria can be understood as a discursive event. The "text" of this discursive event refers to the contents of anticorruption initiatives and legal instruments such as the EFCC, ICPC, CCB, PPA, NEITI, BMPIU, NIPC, ERC, WAI, CCEC, WAC, WAIC, Criminal Code, Penal Code, as well as sections of the constitutions directly and indirectly dealing with corruption. The "discursive practice" is EFCC's action on and in conjunction with judicial interpretations of these instruments, as well as its acceptance and reception by both institutions and the people in society. The EFCC, in interaction with the courts, is the 'executioner' of all legal instruments relating to corruption, as such, the flag-bearer of anticorruption. The "social process" is the broader anticorruption processes or movement and its outcome in Nigeria. These three-dimensional processes form the basis of the discursive event, anticorruption, in Nigeria. Consequently, below is an attempt to draw an analytical line between text, discursive practice and social process of anticorruption.

6.1 *Anti/corruption as Texts*

As texts, the focus is on how discourses are activated through textual representations, written or spoken. This can be done through an examination of language, both written and spoken. This includes, and especially, legal instruments and sections of the constitution relating to corruption and anticorruption. Textual analysis of linguistic properties such as interactional control or setting, ethos, metaphors, wordings and grammar in order to gain insight into the way agenda is set, relationships are established and social identities and structures

constructed are considered important since the choice of words and grammar and their ordering are no product of accident. Therefore, “textual analysis involves the analysis of the way propositions are structured and the way propositions are combined and sequenced” to give meaning to a discourse (Richardson, 2007: 38).

Anticorruption as texts focuses on micro-level discursive events whose interpretation ‘mediates’ between abstract social conceptions and concrete social structures and practices (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). Exploring the micro-level features of texts would help understand the embedded meanings of social phenomenon in specific instances and its specific articulations as social processes.

6.2 *Anti/corruption as a Discursive Practice*

At this level, the focus is on how texts are produced and consumed. This includes an examination of how notions of corruption and anticorruption is generated and understood; what processes goes into its making and how it is articulated. This is the intermediate position between texts and social phenomenon or process (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Collier, 1994). Tracing the inter-textual relations of texts or chains of texts would help illuminate how their contents and structures are formed and transformed, and how the conditions of their production impact on the meaning they convey/represent (Fairclough, 1995; Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002), as the social setting of their production changes or differs (Richardson, 2007). Additionally, a sociological dimension comes in at this level, that is, examination of how readers-targeted audience of text, interpret or decode the texts.

This will help explore not only how corruption is conceptualised in texts, but how the enforcement agencies interpret it, draw on other texts *intertextually* and identify what discourses they draw on *interdiscursively* (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Intertextuality is understood to refer to a communicative condition where current discursive events draw heavily on previous ones by using similar words or phrases due to difficulty in avoiding them or otherwise, while interdiscursivity occurs when a discourse draw on different discourses and genres to articulate itself (Fairclough, 1992: 117; cf. Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002: 73). In other words, “interdiscursivity is a form of intertextuality” that articulates itself through specific discourse(s) (Jorgensen and Phillips, *op cit.*), while intertextuality connotes the influence of history on a text and vice versa (Fairclough, 1992: 102).

In Fairclough's CDA, for instance, causal relationship between texts and social change can be established by measuring for interdiscursivity, where change is associated with a high level of interdiscursivity while stagnation (or reproduction of the status quo) is associated with a low level of interdiscursivity. Similarly, the extent of intertextuality in a text is reflective of the extent of changeability and/or continuity embodied in a discourse (Fairclough, 1992, 1993, 1995; Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Accordingly, in Nigeria, with anticorruption on the rise, an examination of the intertextual and interdiscursive components of corruption and anticorruption is critical to understanding the articulation of anticorruption and its possible outcomes.

It is important to note that, in Norman Fairclough's tradition, discursive practices are structured according to “orders of discourse”. This ‘order’ comprises of discourses, genres, narrative, and styles which are articulated together in order to establish and, sometimes, mediate dialectical relationships between abstract structures and concrete social phenomenon (Fairclough, 2003; Thomas, 2003). Each ‘order’ comprises different elements to more or lesser degree. Taken together, a discursive practice can shed light on the possibility and/or resistance to change. However, what is paramount in CDA is examining/understanding how these, often conflicting, elements are articulated together, contextualised, and recontextualised to give meaning to events in society.

To this end, examining important or landmark discursive practices (and their relationships) will provide the heuristic for understanding the meanings embedded in micro-level units as texts and their broader social processes as anticorruption. Here, the focus could be on how texts are mobilised and utilised in specific context. To analyse the intermediate level of discursive practices and the meaning-making features of texts; how they are employed in particular contexts, for specific purposes, and with practical outcomes/consequences. Discursive practices are crucial to understanding not only texts as embedded form of meaning, but a series of building processes through which controversial phenomenon achieves consensus or makes sense (Schuman, 1995; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). For example, Vaara *et al.* (2006) study on organisational behaviour drew on van Leeuwen and Wodak's *The Grammar of Legitimation* (1999), to demonstrate the crucial role of language in the crafting of legitimacy in a social setting. Vaara *et al.* (2006) identified “normalisation, authorisation, rationalisation, moralisation and narrativisation” as sense-making sequence of language through which legitimacy is articulated. This sequencing, in its reverse, could be instructive of how illegitimacy is equally annunciated.

6.3 *Anti/corruption as a Social Process*

This is the manifest level of a discourse as the nexus between texts and social process mediated by discursive practice. The concern here is how to contextualise the text and discursive practice, and this can be done at two levels. First, exploring the order of discourses and the relationship between the different discursive practices and, second, mapping out and differentiating between discursive and non-discursive relationships in order to explore the wider social context of discourse. Discourse as a social process involves two main characteristics: language

use as an integral part or the primary building-block of society and language as a performative tool of social structuration or having a performative function in society.

Thus, language is not merely a part of the meaning-making process of society; it forms and is in turn informed by social reality in a dialectical relationship. At this point the discursive text, its practice and outcome are interrogated i.e. has there been transformation from the discourse of corruption and anticorruption over time? What kind or form of transformation has (taken place) occurred as a result of the discursive practice of anticorruption in terms of maintaining the hitherto corrupt order? Has it strengthened corrupt practices and/or delegitimizing and de-lucratise corruption? In other words, the sociopolitical and ideological consequences of the discursive practice constitute the focus at this level, examining the real effect or impact of the discourse on society generally.

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- x. War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC) of Sani Abacha’s regime (1993-98)
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