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Lapai International Journal of Politics (LIJOPOL) is devoted to providing access to current knowledge and cutting edge research on issues related to politics, economy, society as well as other closely related areas. The Journal is a publication of the Department of Political Science, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Nigeria.

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3. Tables, diagrams, graphs and other illustrations should be infixed inside the body of the article where necessary or put in appendix if too large.
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5. Author's names, designations and affiliations, e-mail and phone number(s) should be typed on a separate sheet and attached to the article.
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PUBLIC PROCUREMENT POLICY AS A TOOL FOR ALLEVIATING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISPARITIES: LESSONS FROM NIGERIA

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Abstract

The public procurement system practices in most countries, especially developing nations, majorly focus on solving infrastructure problems and acquiring services and goods on. Items necessary for developmental purposes and the day-day running of state affairs. Against this conventional notion, however, this paper demonstrates the applicability of public procurement to addressing other important societal concerns. Specifically, the paper explores the usefulness of public procurement as a veritable tool for alleviating socioeconomic disparities among ups and categories of people in the society. It concludes by arguing that, following the examples of other countries, Nigeria could maximize her public procurement power to accomplish similar goals through a review and amendment of the country's 1999 Constitution and the Public Procurement Act of 2007, to bring to bear the socioeconomic realities of the country in her public procurement practice and system. The paper is basically a theoretical and qualitative research. Data for the study were derived mainly from secondary sources and the descriptive method of qualitative analysis was employed to analyze the data.

Keywords: Development, Diversity, Public Procurement, Public Procurement Policy, Socio-Economic Disparity.

Introduction
In all countries, public procurement remains a key instrument for achieving inclusive development and its potentials are yet to be fully tapped (Kashap, 2004). Indeed, the field of public procurement is still relatively an under-studied area among economists, lawyers and social scientists despite the scale and complexity of government purchases (Arowsnith and Hartley, 2000). However, in the recent times, especially in the wake of the global economic crises, issues related to public procurement are gradually gaining growing attention among scholars, policy makers, national governments and development partners and/or donor agencies. This is mainly due to the magnitude of capital outlays in the public procurement market and the immense innate potentials of the procurement system to positively affect the society by transforming these values into concrete development achievements. "Government procurement of goods and services typically accounts for 10-15% of GDP for developed countries and up to as much as 20% of GDP for developing countries" (Kashap, 2004:134). Public procurement thus holds more than can be discerned for the world's development, and these economic resources must be adequately managed. Consequently, the increasing attention has also partly stemmed from the need for effective and efficient mechanism for ensuring proper management and channeling of the

enormous financial resources available in the procurement sector towards actualizing established development ends.

Moreover, in the new millennium, national governments and development partners have come face-to face with numerous emerging challenges bothering on societal administration. These including pressures to cultivate good governance practices through participatory decision making as well as creating enabling environment for equal access to social, political and economic opportunities to all members and groups in the society. Characteristically, "Public Procurement is an indispensable economic activity for good governance" (Kashap, 2004:133). As an upshot, public procurement has also attracted appreciable concern as state actors are being compelled, both by human forces and realities attributable to prevailing societal exigencies, to adopt public procurement as a part of the broad measures for eliminating socioeconomic differences among groups and cleavages in the society. This is considered both as a matter of a conscious and deliberate policy measure and a strategy for enhancing national engineering and cohesion. An inclusive, responsible and widely accepted government is such that ensures equal participation of its members in the administrative process as well as present an unequal leverage to all constituent elements to benefit from the common wealth. Public procurement is the

most economically or business-like viable side of government. The huge financial resources designated to the procurement sector are publicly or collectively-owned. Hence, ensuring that all societal elements benefit from it, has become one major concern of state managers in both developed and developing countries.

This paper is motivated by the need to demonstrate the usefulness of the public procurement system as a tool for curing certain aspects of societal ill, specifically, socioeconomic biases, and lessons Nigeria can draw from empirically generated theoretical evidences from some countries. To achieve this key objective, the paper is structured into six major parts with the introductory section as first part. The second part explains the meaning and main rationale for public procurement. The third part is the justification of public procurement as a socioeconomic policy instrument. The fourth part demonstrates how the public procurement system can serve as a veritable instrument for addressing socioeconomic un-equilibrium in the modern society by drawing examples from the experiences of some countries. The fifth part consists of the lessons Nigeria can draw from other countries' experiences and what it can do. The sixth part is constituted by the final conclusion of the paper.

Meaning and Basic Rationale for Public Procurement

Scholars have offered various definitions in attempt at explaining the meaning and purpose of public procurement. As can be deduced from the different definitions, the concept of public procurement seems to be enjoying quite an appreciable degree of consensus among scholars in the field regarding the meaning of the term. Though scholars' definitions vary in terms of manners of presentation, they obviously convey the same idea as well as imply the same thing. According to Ifejika and Aliu (2015:125), for instance, public procurement refers to "the most active business part of government, the means by which essential goods and services are provided to the public while ensuring adequate and efficient public expenditure management". Of course, today governments all over the world have received a great deal of attention as providers of essential services, such as health, education, defense and infrastructure. To be able to meet the demand for these services, governments purchase goods and services from the marketplace" (Odhiambo and Kamau, 2003:10). Therefore, public procurement can be alternatively viewed as "the aspect of governmental activity that brings it into face-to-face contact with the private sector, either locally or internationally, for the exchange of goods, works or services for financial or monetary considerations" (Ifejika and Aliu (2015:125).

In his own words, Kashap (2004:134) conceives of public procurement as "the purchasing by governments and local authorities of the works, goods and services they need to operate - ranging from simple office items to sophisticated high-tech equipment". For him, "procurement also includes purchasing, hiring, leasing or any other contractual means of engaging suppliers in the provisions of public services" (Kashap, 2004:134). The definition by the World Bank is also noteworthy in this regard. The World Bank (1995) sees public procurement broadly as involving the purchasing, hiring or obtaining by contractual means of goods, construction works and services by the public sector. In alternative terms, public procurement, according to the World Bank (1995), refers to the purchase of commodities and contracting of construction works and services by use of resources from state budgets, local authority budgets, state foundation funds, domestic loans or foreign loans guaranteed by the state, foreign aid as well as revenue received from the economic activity of state. In other words, public procurement simply means procurement or acquisition by a procuring entity using public funds (World Bank, 1995).

The public process generally consists of three major phases: (i) deciding which goods or services to be bought and when to buy them (procurement planning); (ii) the process of placing a contract to purchase those goods or services which involves, specifically, choosing who is to be the

supplier or contractor and the terms on which the goods and services are to be provided; and (iii) the process of administering the contract to ensure effective performance. These three critical stages or phases constitute what is referred to as public procurement (Arrowsmith, 2010). "The items involved in public procurement range from simple goods or services such as clips or cleaning services to large commercial projects, such as the development of infrastructure, including road, power stations and airports" (Odhiambo and Kamau, 2003:10). Fundamentally, "public procurement is different from private procurement, because in 'public procurement the economic results must be measured against more complex and long-term criteria'" (Odhiambo and Kamau, 2003:10). Furthermore, public procurement is carried-out bearing other considerations in mind, besides the economy such as accountability, non-discrimination among potential suppliers and respect for international obligations. It is mainly for this reason that public procurement in all countries is subjected to enacted laws and regulations, in a bid to guide against possible harm to the public interests (Odhiambo and Kamau, 2003:10). Consequently, Wittig (1999) sees public procurement as a business process in a political system having special consideration for integrity, accountability, national interest and effectiveness.

considerations applied to the 1989 Babangida Constituent Assembly Committee found, rather, that Nigerians "were near unanimous that the 1979 Constitution had been tried and tested and, therefore, provides a better point of departure in the quest for institutionalism in Nigeria (Report of the Constitution Debate Coordinating Committee 1999). Making only minor adjustments, the 1979 document, the Tobin Committee recommended adopting the adjusted documents as the new constitution. General Abdulsalam Abacha's administration, with a few amendments in early May 1999 and handed power to the newly elected civilian regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo on 29 May.

Thus, the institution retains presidential government and a federal system with three orders of government, and it addresses various political issues that have divided ethnic and cultural groups. The issue of sharing political power among ethnic groups is addressed by the principle of rotation in executive office. The marginalization of disadvantaged minorities has been ameliorated by the establishment of the Federal Character Commission to enforce equity (i.e., affirmative action or positive discrimination) in public-service appointments. The distribution of wealth has been proved by entrenchment of a new revenue sharing formula. Surpassing all its presidential predecessors, the 1999 Constitution has been enforced for more than sixteen years and survived its first major test: countrywide general elections

conducted in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 which marked first in history, the peaceful transition from the party PDP to the opposition party APC.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

It is critical to note that insecurity does not just occur in the country but caused by some factors. Apparently, there are many factors causing insecurity in the country and this include inter alia; incessant ethno-religious and communal conflicts, political instability, bad governance, decomposition and attendant lack of efficacy of state institutions, economic stagnation/decline, intense poverty, high rate of unemployment, income disparities, social dislocation, breakdown of rural-urban migration, breakdown of societal values leading to fraudulent community unrest etc (Nwachukwu 2011).

Similarly, Kupoleti (1990:321)

"submitted that political instability arising from the absence of an enviable political culture, religious intolerance and fanaticism, ethnic rivalry, uneven distribution of development projects and amenities, and concentration of wealth in the hands of a disproportionate, lazy few are some of the internal threats facing this country."

Other scholars like Ajakaiye (2002), and Jega (2007) are all in agreement that poverty appears to be the major greatest underlying

m Misappropriation of national revenue, and
n uninformed and visionless leadership and followership

Conclusion

Security is a dynamic phenomenon and a persistent societal problem, ravaging the country. It is tied to the stability, survival, growth and development of any country. A real and potential threat to democratic rule makes it an issue of constant review and discussion, aimed at devising appropriate mechanism for its extinction in the country. Without viable alternative options for checkmating the menace of insecurity in the country, it is unlikely that democracy can thrive well and human rights cannot be guaranteed. This is because a democratic state feel more secured than a non-democratic one because of the prevalence of effective mechanism that ensures greater common goods.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations appeared prime as to ensuring a conducive atmosphere for democracy to triumph and a secured national security in Nigeria.

That for a well flourished and secured Nigerian State, there should be a national philosophy that would serve as a national impulse, and guide individuals' action. This philosophy should be one of purposeful leadership, predicated on probity, transparency, and accountability.

threats to security in Nigeria. They further opined that a combination of widening gap in income inequality, worsening unemployment situation and perceptions of group discrimination and marginalization based on ethnic, religious, and communal differences, create rigidity divides based on WE versus THEM syndrome, buff the ashes of group hatred and ignite tensions and even violent conflicts. Idowu (1999) quoted in Nwachukwu (2011:76) aptly highlighted a multiplicity of factors that threaten security in Nigeria thus;

- a Bad and weak government;
- b Human rights violation;
- c Unjust and inequitable distribution of National resources including political posts, industries, investments, funds etc;
- d Disunited and un-integrated ethnic groups;
- e Ethnic and religious antagonisms and cleavages;
- f Weak and poor economy marked by corruption and weak currency etc;
- g Social-economic hardship, unemployment, hunger, starvation, cashlessness etc.
- h Weak military might;
- i Coups and military rule
- j Communal clashes;
- k Unhealthy competition among the ethnic groups for national resources
- l Political domination

Government must always strive through good policies and programmes to impact positively on the life of the people. This to a large extent will reduce anger and frustration on the part of the people, often vented in the form of violent demonstration against government and its agencies, and sabotage of public assets and facilities.

Other stakeholders in the internal security arrangements should be fully engaged. The military, customs, immigration, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), National Agency for Food, Drug, Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and other agencies must continue to discharge their respective responsibilities effectively since internal security is a collective effort and not the monopoly of the police. This can best be assured when every agency plays its own role without fear or favour.

Finally, the study also recommends the need for a harmonious working relation between the National Assembly and the Executive Arms of the government so as to enact laws that will make Nigeria a corrupt free state as this will no doubt restore public confidence on governance or government. This can only be achieved where people of like minds that there

interest and priority is on the promotion of social goods and not those of principalities in indination.

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