

A Critical Analysis of Corruption and its Problems¹ in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT The problems posed to mankind by corruption due to the lack of its definitive and universalistic conceptualisation and, its resultant conscious and unconscious institutionalisation, in most cases, across various polities of the world form the core of the analysis of this paper. Specifically, zero-ing in, on Nigeria and other developing polities of Africa, with concrete examples, this paper examines the concept of corruption and its hydra-headedness in our society as does, what to be done in combating the increasing spread of its tumour to all fibres of the socio-economic, political and cultural physiology of these nations. In the process, it was revealed that, the lack of definitional unanimity on the concept has made its mere explanation the analytical goal rather than offering meaningful solutions to the problems it poses by way of its covert or overt institutionalisation, to the growth of our societies and mankind in general. These problems notwithstanding, this paper perused and synopsized the explanatory efforts already made regarding what constitutes corruption and its danger to the socio-economic system of most polities (Nigeria inclusive) within the global political community. In the process, and, without prejudice to the issues of cultural relativism and normative narrowing, we have been able to establish that idiosyncratic philosophy, normative impediments, and, paucity of civic virtues among others, are causally related to corruption in most polities of the world and, particularly in Nigeria. It has equally been analytically shown with current and concrete Nigerian examples, that, corruption in whatever form is inimical to the development of any society. Given this, it is our conclusion that further research on the possibility of a definitional consensus is necessary, if only to properly understand more, the moral fibres of our societies and their receptivity or otherwise to the issue of corruption in view of its malignancy to national development.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is dangerous and inimical to the systemic existence of any polity. It is a socio-political, economic and moral malaise that may permeate and cripple, as a result of its contagiousness and malignancy, the nerves of any polity. It is “an intolerable characteristic” (Fullerton, 2000) that should be discouraged in governance because once it sets into any part, it automatically contaminates all the strata of that system’s multidimensional hierarchy in ways symmetrical to the spread of a bush fire (Akindele, 1995).

It has become severely endemic to public life in most, if not all the African States through its terminal contamination. Thus, as Odugbemi (Odugbemi, 2000) once opined: “corruption is a major problem in developing... countries”, “a problem which diverts scarce resources away from development and eradication of poverty”. This has been largely so in Africa because the Continent has far too many “political dinosaurs”, “tyrants” and “tropical gangsters” and, “far too few states-men” as leaders (Goldsmith, 2000) whose proclivity for shabby political goings-on like the “bleeding of the national economies for personal benefits”, is unequalled within the global political community. Its effects on Africa

are, to say the least, incalculable. Infact, Africa, which President Clinton once described as “a continent with enormous potential” is afflicted with the “devastating effects of corruption”.

These effects are detrimentally pronounced on her “social, cultural, economic and political foundations” as well as on her “economic and social developments and efforts to eradicate poverty” (Kurata, 1999). This is particularly so, in that, as Afrigov (AFRIGOV, 1995) once revealed “corruptions in countries like Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Zaire are legendary”. It should be stressed however, that, even though, as once opined, “African countries have made significant progress in their fight against corruption” (Kurata, op cit), its hydra-headedness remains extremely problematic for effective and accountable governance in most African countries. This has largely remained so despite some African countries’ “public and firm stand against corruption at a global forum in Washington in 1999” (Kurata Ibid).

This trend will continue and Africa will never get far unless the problems of corruption which are manifestations of bad governance are addressed (Mule, 2000) and checkmated particularly at this commencement of the twenty-first century because, as Wolfensohn (the World Bank

President) (Wolfenshon, 1999) once revealed, "Investors today... (prefer) to move their money to where the risks of corruption are less pronounced". Not only this, corruption equally acts as blockade with severe consequences for aid assistance in that:

perception in donor countries that corruption in the recipient countries sends their aid assistance down a black-hole is one of Wolfenshon, 1999 the greatest threats to future aid (Ibid).

The disturbing trend of corruption in Africa and, indeed, in Nigeria is concretely reflected in the 1999 and 2000 corruption rankings by the Transparency International (TI) (Kurata, op cit). The rankings show that:

Cameroon remained at the bottom of the list as the country where government officials are perceived to be the readiest to accept bribes... Nigeria came close to receiving that dubious distinction (ibid).

This, - (as it, specifically relates to the Nigerian case) - is corroborated by the USAID Report (Comet, 2000) according to which Nigerians see corruption as very pervasive in the country. The report concretely showed that:

94% of those interviewed perceive some corruption, including 52.8% who believe that people "always bribe officials." Almost three-fourth of respondents disagree with the statement that "bribery is not common among public officials in Nigeria."

Not only this, as once reported: *Civil servants in Mozambique were (once) paid a total of \$160 million in bribes, a sum amounting to 90% of (her) governments budgets. Yet 98% of the country's GNP comes from foreign aid. (AFRIGOV, op cit)*

Infact, as a result of Corruption, and, its accompanying citizens' perception of "state institution as systemically corrupt and unresponsive" (Charlick, 2000), coupled with the inability of most African leaders (particularly Nigeria) to see "good governance as central to development" and, flagrantly doing what they think is best for themselves rather than what is best for the masses (Goldsmith, 2000), (Mule, 2000), many Nigerians have developed apathy to civic responsibilities. Consequently, the state in Nigeria (and, indeed, in Africa) has:

failed to achieve (real) legitimacy in the eyes of majority of African citizens who are consequently forced to defend themselves by resorting to tribalism or clientilism (ibid).

This tends to confirm the "Gallup international 2000 Millenium Survey" (Kurata, 1999) which showed that: "where corruption is at its worst, disillusionment with democracy is/(would be) at its best" (Kurata, Ibid).

Through corruption, the "control of the state and access to it" (in Nigeria), still ranks among the fastest avenues to private accumulation (of public capital) and group betterment (PA-NET, 2000). This bleeding of the nation's economy for personal benefits had variously contributed to the leakage of capital from Nigeria for illegal deposit abroad. This, "misuse of executive official position to misappropriate public money (AFRIGOV, op cit) in itself, has created a virile political landscape for the "politicalisation of corruption" which, as Vittal and Mahalingam (Vittal and Mahalingam, 2000) once claimed; "flourishes because of the need for ever increasing funds for political purposes". Infact, as AAPS (2000) clearly articulated:

Corruption has become endemic to public life in most African countries where politicians and public servants at various levels of the state machinery have appropriated funds for private purposes.

This among other factors explains Wolfenshon's (lelete, op cit) claim that:

Corruption is a severe problem in some poor... countries not because the people (as a whole) do not truly want integrity in public life rather, it (corruption) flourishes because conditions are ripe for it. (Wolfenshon, 1999 op cit)

One of such conditions, is "ethnic and financial loyalties" which according to BBC focus on Africa (2000) "have always dominated the Nigerian politics." An example of this is readily found in the (current) National Assembly where the "members (in August, 1999) provoked (public) outrage with their decision to award themselves US\$30,000 each just to furnish their houses" which, they actually and eventually did in flagrant disregard of the electorate to whom they are accountable and the need to "create transparency and accountability" in governance (Fullerton, opcit).

Generally, corruption has caused incalculable damage to "social and political development of Nigeria and, indeed, of most polities in Africa (Onoja, 2000). It has been particularly so in Nigeria because:

Corruption has a long pedigree and, as a process, it has definitely threaten the existence of

all governments... As a phenomenon, (it) runs deep in the life-line of all previous governments and, is even prominent in the present administration, whose functionaries played such key roles in the dark days of military dictatorship (Onoja, Ibid).

As a result of these and, the realisation of its detrimental effects on the socio-political and economic growth and development of the Nigerian State, certain pedagogical, intellectual and research attentions had been paid to it in the past in ways symmetrical to a premonition of its holocaust effects on the fabric of the Nigerian society.

These attentions, among others include(d) the annual conference of the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association (NASA) of 1982, which chose as its theme "Nigeria: Corruption in Development", "the 1989 United Nations International Conference on Corruption", and the 1993 Centre for Advance Social Science (CASS) Seminar on Corruption" (Oboelam, 1993; CASS, 1993; Yagus, 1998).

It is sad, however, to note that no concrete government policy outputs in Nigeria and other polities in Africa, had actually been realistically anchored on the recommendations of these various efforts relative to the reduction (if not total elimination) of this social canker, its root causes, and, effects. Thus, its venomous potency is yet to relent in Africa and, particularly in Nigeria even at the commencement of this twenty-first century. Infact, its prevalence and fallouts had, in certain instances acted as trigger for political actions and challenges of the state by the civil society.

Given the foregoing, what actually is corruption? Answers to this question are attempted in the immediate section below.

DEFINITIONS: WHAT IS CORRUPTION?

Generally, the conceptualisation of the term corruption has long been ideologically, morally, culturally, politically and intellectually elusive to the point of losing sight of its detrimental and parasitic symbiosis with many polities including Nigeria and their citizens all over the world.

As a result of this, its definition has continued to be shrouded by value preferences and differences. This, has, to some extent, constituted the core of the conceptual difficulty regarding the analysis of the subject matter of corruption.

This conceptual difficulty - which is attributable to many factors (Odekunle, 1986; Akindele, 1985; Yagus, 1998) ranging from the lack of universal values with regards to different behaviours and activities (nepotism, gift-giving, patronage, party-financing) which many writers and analysts have identified as corruption, fertility of certain political environments for corruption due to inequality brought about by exploitations; expansion of governmental functions to many aspect of human existence; to, the amenability of primordial attachment of strong cultural and emotional loyalties to corrupt tendencies, - is of two fold. The first concerns the actual conception of the subject-matter *per se*, while the second revolves around the conception of corruption in practice, or, reality within the socio-political cultures - (beliefs, attitudes and values) - of the developing nations. While the latter is rooted in the multiplicity of variables (for example, Kinship ties, family expectations, favouritism and nepotism) that demand understanding within the polities of the third world, the former raises moralistic and objective questions (Leys, 1965).

These divergent views and multiplicity of perspectives cut across disciplines, moral, social lines and, across cultures hence, the elusiveness of the indispensable universal consensus regarding the activities, behaviours and other aspects of human beings' existence that could be defined as corruption.

Definitions of corruption have ranged from its typification as using of public or official positions in ways that forsake public interests; deviant behaviours that encourage private gains at public expense; maladjusted behaviours that flagrantly violate the acceptable and legitimized norms of societal expectations; to its conceptualisation as spoiled, unethically polluted, and, rotten behaviours that diverge from the formal and expected role which the society demands of everybody.

To begin with, McMullan (McMullan, 1961) defines corruption in the following way: a public official is corrupt if he accepts money or money's worth for doing something that he is under a duty to do anyway, that he is under a duty not to do, or exercise a legitimate discretion for improper reasons. As for Leff (Leff, 1970) Corruption is: *an extra-legal institution used by individuals or groups to gain influence over the actions of the bureaucracy. As such, the existence of corrup-*

tion per se indicates only that these groups participate in the decision-making process to a greater extent than would otherwise be the case

According to Otite (Otite, 1986) corruption means:

the perversion of (the) integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favour, or moral depravity...corruption involves the injection of additional but improper transactions aimed at changing the moral course of events and altering judgements and position of trust. It consists of the doers (givers) and receivers' use of informal, extra-legal or illegal acts to facilitate matters. It is in this sense that one sees corruption as a lubricator of the social system, a means by which to overcome economic obstacles and bureaucratic red-tapism. Hence, the ambivalence and inconsistency in the theory and practice of corruption, although, it is generally regarded as a debasement of integrity, it may also serve as a nerve in social development.

Banfield (1975), used a conceptual schematization for his definition of this concept. He starts by emphasizing that the "frame of reference" (with regards to corruption) is one in which an agent (an employee) who has accepted the obligation (an employment contract) to act on behalf of his principal, (a person or organization), serves or fails to serve the interest of the principal. He also stresses that in acting on behalf of his principal an agent must exercise some discretion. From this analogy, he explains the concept of corruption thus:

An agent is personally corrupt if he unknowingly sacrifices his principal's interest to his own, that is, if he betrays his trust. He is officially corrupt if, in serving his principal's interest, he knowingly violates a rule; that is, acts illegally or unethically albeit, in his principal's interest.

While Dwivedi (1967) sees corruption as including "nepotism, favouritism, bribery, graft and other unfair means adopted by government employees and the public alike to extract some socially and legally prohibited favours", to Scott (Scott, 1972) corruption "involves a deviation from certain acceptable standards of behaviours". And, according to Thorndike-Barnhart (Thorndike-Barnhart), "corruption is the act of making, or the process of becoming evil or wicked. (It involves) bribery, dishonesty. It is synonymous with rot, and decay" and, putridity. This explains while Nye (Nye, 1970) defined corruption as

(any) behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private regarding gains. This includes such behaviours as bribery, nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of ascriptive relationships rather than merit).

Carl Friedrich (1972) in defining corruption, argues in the following manner:

The pattern of corruption may be said to exist whenever a power holder who is charged with doing certain things, that is, a responsible functionary or office holder, is by monetary or other rewards, such as the expectation of a job in the future, induced to take actions which favour whoever provides the reward and thereby damages the group or organization to which the functionary belongs (more specifically, the government and, other socio-economic Institutions)

In his own contribution, Gibbons and Rowat, (1976) defined corruption in two distinct but implicitly connected ways. His first definition goes thus:

(political) corruption is the use of a public office in a way that forsakes the public interest, measured in terms of mass opinion, elite opinion or both, in order that some form of personal advantage may be achieved at the expense of that public interest.

In the second definition, Gibbons and Rowat, (Ibid), emphasized that, corruption in a broader sense means:

... any behaviour pattern where a power holder is induced by some reward to take actions which favour the individual offering the reward and thus conflict with the public interest; or, any behaviour pattern where a power holder seeks to maintain or extend his personal advantage by inducing individuals with some reward to assist him in neglecting the public interest.

THE RESULTANT ANALYTICAL PROBLEMS FROM THE DEFINITIONS

Going through the above definitions, it could be reasonably argued that none is without problems. It should be noted however, that these problems vary in the contents and scope each of them covers. For example, the following writers: McMullan (1961), Leff (1970), Otite (1986),

Yaqub (1988), Banfield (1975), Scott (1972) and Nye (1970), tied the core and scope of their definitions to public officials in government institutions as the main target of corruption to the neglect of the possibility of corruption involving people or institutions other than those connected with the government. This, in our view, constitutes a serious shortcoming with regards to a problem-free analysis of the concept. Specifically, the implied functionalism of corruption as defined by Otiye (1986) is deprecatory.

Eventhough, Dwivedi's (1967) definition seems to prevail over this shortcoming, it, too, suffers from ambiguity and bias. This is identifiable from its inclusion of behaviours like nepotism and favouritism which may be culturally excusable in some cultures despite the antagonism of rational bureaucracy (Akindele, 1987) which makes people in these cultures victims of marginality, thereby open to accusation of corruption. Nye's definition (Nye, 1970 *opcit*) tends to demonstrate similar short-comings regarding the condemnation of culturally defined family ties. Even, his condemnation of patronage which he thinks is only and usually based on ascriptive criteria is misleading. Since political patronage in the developed world does not have to be based on ascriptive relationships but, mostly, on political contributions, either in the past, or, future (potential) to the person making the appointment, or, granting the benefits, Nye's emphasis on ascriptive criteria pre-judges the morality of other cultures where ascription plays a dominant role.

Carl Friedrich's (1972, *opcit*) definition eventhough, less value-laden, compared to some of its type, suffers similar shortcomings which are characteristic of other definitions in one major respect - (the treatment of corruption as a "One-way" Process). Even though, Gibbons (and Rowat, *opcit*) made the same mistake in his first definition, he rectified it in his second definition by ways of including the concept of reciprocity and, removing its restriction to political corruption. This makes the application of his definition within any political system possible. For example, most of the corruptions in Nigeria are actually initiated by the office holders with few imitations by non-office holders. Generally, such office holders may, by virtue of the symbolism of their office or official duties sometimes use delaying tactics in inducing their clients into offering bribes before performing their duties.

These tactics, among others, for example, in Nigeria, now include phrases (in Yoruba Language) like "Kosi iwe" meaning, "no working paper", "Kosi oga nile" meaning, "the Boss is not in"; "a ko le fi ofo inu se ise" meaning "we cannot work with empty stomach (i.e, work without eating)", "oju lasan ko se nfi se aisun" meaning "nothing goes for nothing"; and, "Eyin nikan ko lo ye ki o ma dan oga" meaning "you should not monopolise your wealth".

These tactics which have their types in other Nigerian (ethnic) languages and among other ethnic groups in Nigeria and Africa, are euphemisms for luring the (usually unsuspecting initial)- clients into giving bribes or kick-backs in Nigeria. However, with time, this development seemed to have become understandable to Nigerians and, Africans depending on the issue or issues at stake to the extent that, any time such phrases are mentioned by the corruptor, the corruptee automatically knows what to do. The danger of this, is that, eventhough, the corruptees have the legitimate rights for the benefits at stake they are manacled into offering bribe in one way or the other to the officials before the later would respond. Even, in most cases, the victims are not successful in getting the desired benefits after such unreceipted transactions. Eventhough, the policemen are mostly notorious for this in Nigeria, because of the enormous discretion of enforcement of laws given to them, it has spread like the bush fire into various sectors of the Nation's political landscape. For example, the issuance of Nigerian Passport, import licences, vehicle licences, submission of contract tenders, contract awards, application for employment and so many other things or benefits that should be normally obtained without tensions and nightmarish experiences, have fallen and continue to fall victims to these retrogressive, anti-development, and, corrupt tactics. It is mostly disturbing in that, to the perpetrators, nothing seems to be wrong with this, since to them and, a preponderant majority of the ignorant populace, it is getting their "eto", "obi", "colanut" meaning "right" or "dues" in the course of performing their duties in total disregard of the fact that they are actually paid for doing the job in the first place.

This tends to put into perspective McMullan's (1961) analysis of the relationship between the African police and the African farmer in which the latter will always try to seek (due to ignorance of the duties of the police) the former's favour

by offering a bribe, or conversely, in which the police will use his position to scare the farmer into bribing him, a situation which is reinforced by the fact that:

Law enforcement agents (in Nigeria and indeed Africa) in particular the police, immigration and custom officers, are the guilty ones in this genre (of corruption). They can individually stoop so low to accept bribes of less than five Naira (which is less than half of an American cent) from each commercial vehicle plying the intra-urban routes. Victims of this (corrupt) official high-handedness could be foreign nationals, refugees from the Great Lake States which have (recently) been plunged into wars, crises of dislocation, destitution, ethnic cleansing and so on (Yagou, 1998 op cit).

Gibbon's and Rowat, opcit definition eliminates the problems of shortsightedness or limitation of scope with regards to those who could be accused of corruption. Even though, other factors like extended family problems, inadequate salaries, and, lateness in the payment of salaries to workers as at when due, that usually affect the performance of many public and private Officials, and, institutions in the developing nations were not touched by this definition, the mere fact that it does not condemn them like Dwivedi's 1967 definition, shows how applicable and value neutral it is. It should be emphasized however, that the applicability of this definition within the context of Africa or other developing nations may be hindered by the complexity involved in measuring public opinion (Akindele et al., 1995, 1998) on any issue (be it corruption or otherwise) concerning their kith and kins. As a result of this, Akindele (1995) in an earlier study defined corruption:

as any form of reciprocal behaviour or transaction where both the power/office holder can respectively initiate the inducement of each other by some reward to grant (illegal) preferential treatment or favour against the principles and interest of specific organizations (or public) within the society.

Eventhough, this definition does not completely remove, as Gibbons (Rowat, opcit) puts it, "the impressionistic ways of defining public, private, or any other interests or opinions in the society", but, as Vasliner, (Vasliner, 1996) once noted;

it indicates how the complementarity of social roles - different in their power over one another

- can lead to social relations that are conveniently labelled corruption.

It equally, according to him, shows how the "psychological mechanisms - build up - of expectation for 'special treatment' by purposeful delay tactics can (be used) to initiate the client's bribing efforts, in counter-action".

SPECIFIC FEATURES, ANIFESTATION, AND, INSTITUTIONALISATION OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

It is decipherable from the preceeding arguments in this paper that, corruption had long been incubated and fertilized in most polities of the world. This has been due, among other things, to the problems the concept has generated at theoretical, intellectual and practical levels. As a result of this, and, the continuous elusiveness of a universal criterion for its conceptualisation and, for dealing with its perpetrators, it has become the features of many polities in the world and particularly in Nigeria and, indeed, in Africa. In the process, it has continuously manifested itself and, had been institutionalised by its protagonists or perpetrators to the disadvantage and detriment of the micro and macro components of most societies.

In short, many societies (including the developed and the developing ones) -are ordered on the bedrock and contagious base of corruption and, once the latter (corruption) matures its progenies become the core of the citizens' orientation. This vividly explains the characteristics of many developing nations' political experience particularly, that of Nigeria.

These characteristics include among others: Corrupt ascendancy to political leadership through election rigging, annulment of election, son of the soil philosophy, politics of expediency, doctrine of tenpercenters, judicial fractionalization of human beings, political self-aggrandizement, political Hitlerism (that is, rule by force) as a safety-valve for retention of power, replacement of "we-feeling" by "Me-feeling", contractor-controlled political machinery, uncurtailed lust for wealth, giving and receiving of kick-backs for government contracts (done or undone), police insistence on taking bribes as a precondition for performing their duties and, bureaucrats' indulgence in the act of falsifying accounts, false declaration of assets, false declaration of age, falsification and forgery of certificate,

perjurious inclination, violation of oaths of office, payment of money for governments' job not done, politically motivated assassinations of opponents, deliberate poison of political figures and opponents, and, manipulation of transition programme, gerry-mandering/tinkering with constituencies, avoidance of taxes, entrenchment of black-market syndromes, manipulation of foreign exchange, import licence frauds, pen robbery or looting of the public treasury, creation of "ghost-workers" and so on. For instance, the issue of "ghost" workers and forgery of documents had assumed a dangerous dimension in Nigeria (Odunlami, 1999; Gidado, 1999).

Infact, the existence of this trend in Nigeria which has changed "Government as an instrument of the State" (Nyerere, 1999) to an instrument of corruption and Personal rulership, prompted the startling revelation of how Nigeria's oil wealth was squandered during the second Republic by way of the then questionable annual "one-line votes called contingencies". It equally prompted, Cook's (1997)

(Awojobi, 1982) statement that:

Nigeria could be one of the most prosperous nations. But instead, it has squandered oil and mineral wealth, generated horrendously, unfair income distribution and has become notorious as one of the world's most corrupt countries.

This development actually re-echoed in the corrupt mismanagement of the Nation's gains from oil sales during the Gulf-war. Infact, these gains, according to David-West (1998), "went to the servicing of (Babangida's) personal profligacy".

Corruption in whatever form is a negation of ethical behaviour or societal ethics which, Ogbuehi (1998), defined as "the code of moral principles that sets standards of good or bad, or right and wrong in one's conduct and thereby guides the behaviour". Thus, it is inimical to the development of any society because it usually perforates the building of a socio-politically feasible and, economically solvent nation through the selfish orientations and non-challance (of those involved) to the nation's survival. And, to a greater extent, political stability and militarization of political administration of many polities are progenies and progenitors of corruption. For instance, few of the military interventions and Guerrilla insurrections (from outside or within), in the developing countries particularly in Africa have been justified by those who struck on any

other ground than that of corruption and, determination to stamp it out. A good example is Nigeria where a retrospective analysis of its military experience from 1966 to date (Momoh and Ajetumobi, 1999), actually, in the real sense of it, exonerates none of those who had struck at one time or the other from the citation of corruption of the ousted leaders or regimes as the catalyst for their intervention.

The foregoing notwithstanding, the military themselves had, in most cases, later became blindly corrupt and uncontrollably rapacious in governance through fiscal indiscipline and recklessness to the detriment of the countries over which they had presided (Williams, 1980; Amagu, 1999).

As a result of things like this, the issue of corruption has been so rampant in Nigeria, to the extent that she is now tagged as "a country in a state of manageless stasis" (Ofeimum, 1993). The reason for this is not farfetched in that, among other things, it was discovered in 1993 that:

of the 2,000 billion (at the current prices then) in public sector investments between 1970 and 1990,up to 40 percent went into the service of the corruption industry (Ofeimum, Ibid).

The foregoing is supported by the revelation that:

by the 1970s Nigerian officials were already stealing oil, the source of more than 90 percent of the country's revenue, loading it "onto tankers with no bill of lading issued, making it possible to sell the cargo abroad and pocket the entire proceeds (Mbachu, 1993).

It is equally supported by the fact that:

In 1990, accounts for the proceeds from petroleum exports showed that 1.5 billion dollars (over 60 billion) had disappeared. In the same year, about 5 billion in oil revenue recorded by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) did not go into the Federation Account as required by the revenue distribution mechanism....by 1991, one billion dollars had been spent for undocumented purposes" out of two billion dollars Nigeria realised from the sale of its equity in joint venture with shell (Mbachu, Ibid).

Rather than relent, the intensity of this Kleptocratic tendency in Nigeria has continued to increase in vitality to the extent that at a particular time:

the size of the money kept by individual Nigerians in foreign bank accounts (as once) estimated

(was) at parity with the national debt and some billions above 33 billion dollars owed by the country to International Finance Institutions (Ofeimum, 1993 op cit).

This had once been equally put into perspective thus:

It is a well-known fact that corruption has become a way of public officers life in Nigeria, to the extent that it is now an unwritten directive principle of state policy. It is a matter of fact that the culprits, the perpetrators of these highly-placed corrupt practices....are so few, yet so powerful. They control well over 85 percent of the nation's wealth,...they could purchase the nation's silence and acceptance and if that fails, could raise a private army to take on the nation (Ademyi, 1999).

These developments fit perfectly into Ake's 1996 submission that:

the state in Africa is not a public force but tends to be privatised in the sense that it is appropriated to the service of private interests by the dominant faction of the elite. (in this case the military) (emphasis mine).

The foregoing, which is a reflection of "public expenditure management in Nigeria is one of mindless plunder of National Wealth". It tends to justify the depiction of Nigeria as "a country where the robbery of state fund is flagrantly institutionalised" (Mbachu, 1993 op cit; Ofeimum, 1993 op cit).

This was succinctly put into perspective in 1993 by the Centre for advance Social Science (CASS) (1993 op cit) when it stated that:

The problem is that the government which is needed to defeat corruption is the core of the problem in Nigeria. It is government that has contributed mostly to lowering the moral tone of society in Nigeria. It is in government that corruption thrives most, wasting resources we need, defeating all prospects of democracy and development, all sense of patriotism and turning all of us into hardened cynics with no concern for public good, no faiths in public morality or even in its possibility.

On a contemporary note, the proclivity of late Dictator, General Sani Abacha and his men, for kleptocracy, and, ruination of the Nation's economy through pen robbery and looting of the National treasury is unequalled in the annals of Nigeria's history.

It is against this backdrop that one could understand the commitment of the Obasanjo

Government - (during his second coming into power)- to the eradication of corruption in the Nigerian society as could be seen from the government's initial policy outputs on ascension into power. The Obasanjo's government's anti-corruption bill which was belatedly in the year 2000 passed into law by the National Assembly, and, crusade to revamp the Nigerian Nation once again, speak volumes about the malignant effects of corruption and what the latter has done to the moral fibres of Nigeria and Nigerians. Even-though, it could be argued that, the eventual handling of the forgery and falsification of age by the former speaker (Alhaji Ibrahim Salisu Buhari)- of the House of Representatives in Nigeria, by the House of Representatives itself, the senate and; the insistence of the Executive branch of government under president Obasanjo that the law of the land should take its course are indications of the anti-corruption philosophy and its crusade for moral uprightness in Nigeria, the initial attitudinal philosophy of the house of Representatives in particular towards the case was nothing but a disaster. Infact, it tended to show the house in its entirety as a corrupt institutional sympathizer and sustainer of corruption and corrupt officials.

The foregoing, and, the belated, though, appropriate handling of the Buhari issue by the National Assembly through their committees notwithstanding, the extent to which they could continue to sustain the crusade against corruption and issues that border on same, in the fourth Republic would, in our view, dictate the acceptability or otherwise of Nigeria and Nigerians within the commity of Nations as a morally upright nation or group of people. In other words, as once opined, "it would determine whether the president's (i.e. Obasanjo) promise to tackle problems of pervasive corruption in government should be taken seriously" (The News, 1999). It would equally determine whether this same determination or crusade to combat corruption is not just a moralizing and patronizing approach to give the impression that something is been done about this socio-political, economic and cultural tumour that has affected all the strata of Nigerian society. This is more so and would continue to be so looking at the questionable presidential pardone given to the former speaker in the year 2000 by President Obasanjo.

This is particularly so in that, the challenges ahead are enormous, looking at the fact that the

erstwhile-speaker had to be factually depicted among other efforts, with phrases like “the face of a liar” (The News, 1999, Ibid) (Tell magazine, 1999) before he actually contemplated resignation from office and the National Assembly. Infact, the enormosity of these challenges equally lies in the fact that, due to the Buharigate and other of its types - (e.g. the senate contract award scam that led to the impeachment of the Senate President Dr. Chuba Okadigbo and the Senate Leader in the year 2000) - that were later detected and those that are yet to be detected, and, which may not be detected, Nigeria’s democracy is endangered because as once opined “a democracy where law makers applaud a law breaker like Buhari with a standing ovation and, where evidently corrupt law makers (e.g. in the House of Representatives are unwilling to probe themselves), is endangered” (Olajuyigbe, 1999).

These same characteristics explained the initial handling of the corrupt antecedents of the first (former) Senate President Chief Evan(s) Enwerem by the Nigerian upper House.

These disturbing developments in Nigeria could, among other factors, be tied to the crescendo of corruption which had earlier reached its high-noon in Africa in the sixties and dovetailed into the eighties and nineties. Within these periods, the emergence and consolidation of personal rulership and sit-tightism gained increasing momentum because the continent of Africa was then and still:

blessed with the likes of Banda, Hought-Boigny, Kaunda, Toure, Amin, Bokassa, Kenyatta, Mobutu etc., who were not only content to be dictators - for - a- while, but dictators - (presidents) - for life, conse-quent upon this travesty of rulership, the state and its resources became “private estates” that should be used as the leader deemed fit (Yagus, 1998 op cit).

Yusuf (1990) eruditely articulated the notoriety of these corrupt leaders in Africa and, the absurdity of their behaviours in power. This, according to him are exemplified by mobutu, who, through personal rulership of Zaire cornered for himself over 40% of the Gross Domestic Product of his country. It is equally shown by Amin, who, elevated himself to the rank of Field Marshall in the Uganda Army in addition to making himself the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor of Makerere University and; Bokkasa who emptied the national treasury of Central Africa Republic in the process of crowning

himself as an Emperor over a non-existing Empire. And, who, as a result of ruthlessness in power, had no second-in-command or Vice-president.

A summation of the foregoing, shows that corruption has become the conduit pipe for draining public funds and fostering irrational acts that are constantly asymmetrical to societal probity and norms of decency in Nigeria and, Africa. Given this, it is appropriate to state that, the *putridity* of corruption and its continuous holocaust effects on the socio-political, economic, cultural and psychological nerves of the Nigerian polity call for combative attacks.

COMBATING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: WHAT DO WE DO?

The question that needs to be asked at this point is that; what can be done to free the nerves of Nigeria from the crippling manacle or shackles of corruption? Many schools of thought have attempted the provision of solutions to the problems of corruption in Africa and, indeed, in Nigeria. In the process, various approaches ranging from Religious, military, moral, patronizing and, minimalist to the materialist have been respectively identified as appropriate mechanisms for combating corruption in Nigeria and, indeed, in Africa. For instance, corruption, from the perspective of scholars of the materialist persuasion, is a criterion variable (Akindele and Olaopa, 1997) of the productive forces which among, other things include “the process of dealing with the multinationals (Moody-stuart, 1997). In other words, it gains vitality, and triumphs in a capitalist system eventhough, its demise too, also lies in the inherent internal contradictions of capitalism.

In addition to this, it has equally been stated that the “right thing, whatever economic ideology one may uphold, is to “principally tackle corruption” and confront its devil locked in the engine of development”.

Given the above, and, the almost permanent elusiveness of appropriate mechanisms for combating corruption other than prescriptions that are yet to be really practically effected in Nigeria and, in Africa, it has been argued that “what is required in Nigeria and Africa to deal with the hydra-headedness of corruption is a development paradigm coupled with a democratic system of government based on good and

accountable leadership that would be hard-working, responsive, responsible and unimpeachable (Martins, 1999; Akindele and Obiyan, 1996; Yagas, 1998 op cit). And, that, this may be attained through the embracement and imbibing of the multi-dimensional syndromes of ethics ranging from that of honesty, hardwork, service and knowledge to decorum in Nigeria (Awosika, 1999).

Not only this, the battle against corruption in Nigeria and Africa may achieve positive result, through: the cessation of seeing the "state as a primary source of private wealth" (Iseike-Jonali, 1995); and, through visionary; accountable; and reconciliatory philosophy; encouragement of free expression; non-dissembled or feigned democracy; committed actions against autocracy and injustice; honesty of political actions; follower-ship's resistance of corruption and/or its temptations by learning to say no to corrupt leaders (hip). Infact, the pursuit of the latter, was once succinctly articulated thus:

It is....the people, the perennial victims of political predators, who must refuse co-optation and corruption and insist on justice - in (the) homes, communities, local government areas, states, schools, colleges, universities, work places, etc. (the people must refuse to be carried away by the coated tongue or grease palm, and reject (the) perpetual assault on our common will and dignity as human beings and citizens of Nigeria. If we do not force those who rule us to tread the path of accountability and respect for the rule of law, we would continue in our present misery and sign a pact with eternal underdevelopment. Our fate is too precious to abandon to the whims of the (corrupt) politicians. Our rulers wasted the 20th century for Nigeria. We must not stagger into the next millenium with the same sissyphean burden (Osundare, 1999).

CONCLUSION

The issue of corruption, its problems of conceptualisation, institutionalisation and/or, perpetration and, possible solutions to it, through combative attacks by both the leaders and the led in Nigeria, and, indeed, in Africa have been analytically examined in this paper. In the process, concrete examples within the Nigerian body politic and other African Nations were given as does the usual tactics and phrases of deceit for baiting people into corruption which

had gained increasing fertility in Nigeria. The various definitional efforts on this concept were perused and analysed. This notwithstanding, it has been established that the attainment of a definitional unanimity on this concept continue to be elusive. This, in our view, calls for further research on the concept in line with the ever-increasing complexity of our society and its culture. This, to us, would help to reduce the malignancy of corruption to national development and aid the attainment of a rational policy process devoid of bureau pathologies in the management and authoritative allocation of the scarce societal values for the people in Nigeria, Africa, and mankind in general.

NOTE

1. The meaning of the word "Problems" as used in the title of this article is dichotomous in nature. In the first place it refers to the difficulty often encountered in analytically conceptualising the term "corruption" and, the continuous elusiveness of the attainment of a definitional unanimity or consensus on the concept. And, secondly, it refers to the malignancy of corruption to rational political and administrative process. In other words, it is used to highlight the detrimental effects of the institutionalisation of corruption to a healthy systemic existence of a polity like Nigeria and her people as well as its continuous danger to the physiology of the nation in all ramifications.

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