

Corruption in Nigeria: A new paradigm for effective control

By

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There are many unresolved problems in Nigeria, but the issue of the upsurge of corruption is troubling. And the damages it has done to the polity are astronomical. The menace of corruption leads to slow movement of files in offices, police extortion tollgates and slow traffics on the highways, port congestion, queues at passport offices and gas stations, ghost workers syndrome, election irregularities, among others. Even the mad people on the street recognize the havoc caused by corruption - the funds allocated for their welfare disappear into the thin air. Thus, it is believed by many in the society that corruption is the bane of Nigeria. Consequently, the issue keeps reoccurring in every academic and informal discussion in Nigeria. And the issue will hardly go away!

Some writers say that corruption is endemic in all governments, and that it is not peculiar to any continent, region and ethnic group. It cuts across faiths, religious denominations and political systems and affects both young and old, man and woman alike. Corruption is found in democratic and dictatorial politics; feudal, capitalist and socialist economies. Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist cultures are equally bedeviled by corruption. And corrupt practices did not begin today; the history is as old as the world. Ancient civilizations have traces of widespread 'illegality and corruption.' Thus, "corruption has been ubiquitous in complex societies from ancient Egypt, Israel, Rome, and Greece down to the present" (Lipset and Lenz 2000, pp.112-113). This does not, however, mean that the magnitude of corruption is equal in every society. Some countries are more corrupt than others! As George Orwell notes in his widely read book, *Animal Farm*: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" (June 1996, p.109).

Since corruption is not new, and since it is a global phenomenon, it is not peculiar to Nigeria. However, corruption is pandemic in Nigeria (and in many other African and Asian nations); the leaders as well as the followers are corrupt. Consequently, it has defied all the necessary 'medicines.' If there is a lack of control of corruption in every sphere in the nation, it is then like the old saying: "When water chokes you, what do you take to wash it down?" (The Philosophy of Aristotle, 451-ME2783, p.355).

This paper, therefore, adopts a new approach to tackle the menace of corruption in Nigeria. And a broad definition of the phenomenon matters in the society for its effective control.

Definitions of Corruption

Perhaps, because corruption has received an extensive attention in the communities, and perhaps, due to the fact that it has been over-flogged in the academic circles, corruption has received varied definitions. Corruption has broadly been defined as a perversion or a change from good to bad. Specifically, corruption or "corrupt" behavior "involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit" (Sen 1999, p.275). Corruption is "efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means

- private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit (Lipset & Lenz, 2000, p.112-114).

In addition, corruption is a behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role, because of private [gains] - regarding (personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or status gains. It is a behavior which violates rules against the exercise of certain types of [duties] for private [gains] - regarding influence (Nye, 1967). This definition includes such behavior as bribery (use of a reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of ascriptive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private uses (Banfield 1961). To the already crowded landscape (Osoba 1996), adds that corruption is an "anti-social behaviour conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which undermine the authorities" to improve the living conditions of the people.

Even though some of these definitions of corruption have been around for over decades, the recent development in Nigeria where discoveries of stolen public funds run into billions of US Dollars and Nigeria Naira, make these definitions very adequate and appropriate. Corruption is probably the main means to accumulate quick wealth in Nigeria. Corruption occurs in many forms, and it has contributed immensely to the poverty and misery of a large segment of the Nigerian population.

The Nature and Characteristics of Corruption

Some studies have taken a holistic (broader) approach in the discussion of corruption by dividing it into many forms and sub-divisions. These are:

Political Corruption ('grand');

Bureaucratic Corruption ('petty'); and

Electoral Corruption.

Political corruption takes place at the highest levels of political authority. It occurs 'when the politicians and political decision-makers, who are entitled to formulate, establish and implement the laws in the name of the people, are themselves corrupt.' It also takes place when policy formulation and legislation is tailored to benefit politicians and legislators. Political corruption is sometimes seen as similar to 'corruption of greed' as it affects the manner in which decisions are made, as it manipulates political institutions, rules of procedure, and distorts the institutions of government (NORAD, ch.4, Jan. 2000; The Encyclopedia Americana, 1999).

Bureaucratic corruption occurs 'in the public administration' or 'the implementation end of politics.' This kind of corruption has been branded 'low level' and 'street level.' It is the kind of corruption the citizens encounter daily at places like the hospitals, schools, local licensing offices, police, taxing offices and on and on. Bureaucratic 'petty' corruption, which is seen as similar to 'corruption of need,' occurs when one

obtains a business from the public sector through inappropriate procedure (see NORAD, ch.4, 2000).

Electoral corruption includes purchase of votes with money, promises of office or special favors, coercion, intimidation, and interference with freedom of election [Nigeria is a good example where this practice is common. Votes are bought, people are killed or maimed in the name of election, losers' end up as the winners in elections, and votes turn up in areas where votes were not cast]. Corruption in office involves sales of legislative votes, administrative, or judicial decision, or governmental appointment. Disguised payment in the form of gifts, legal fees, employment, favors to relatives, social influence, or any relationship that sacrifices the public interest and welfare, with or without the implied payment of money, is usually considered corrupt (The Encyclopedia Americana, 1999).

Other forms of corruption include:

A) Bribery: The payment (in money or kind) that is taken or given in a corrupt relationship. These include kickbacks, gratuities, pay-off, sweeteners, greasing palms, etc. (Bayart et. al 1997, p.11).

B) Fraud: It involves some kind of trickery, swindle and deceit, counterfeiting, racketing, smuggling and forgery (Ibid. p.11).

C) Embezzlement: This is theft of public resources by public officials. It is when a state official steals from the public institution in which he/she is employed. In Nigeria the embezzlement of public funds is one of the most common ways of economic accumulation, perhaps, due to lack of strict regulatory systems.

D) Extortion: This is money and other resources extracted by the use of coercion, violence or threats to use force. It is often seen as extraction 'from below' [The police and custom officers are the main culprits in Nigeria] (Bayart et. al 1997, p.11).

E) Favoritism: This is a mechanism of power abuse implying a highly biased distribution of state resources. However, this is seen as a natural human proclivity to favor friends, family and any body close and trusted.

F) Nepotism: This is a special form of favoritism in which an office holder prefers his/her kinfolk and family members. Nepotism, [which is also common in Nigeria], occurs when one is exempted from the application of certain laws or regulations or given undue preference in the allocation of scarce resources (NORAD, ch.1, ch.2 & ch.4, Jan. 2000; Amundsen, 1997; Girling 1997; also see Fairbanks, Jr. 1999).

For effective control of corruption in Nigeria, the society must develop a culture of relative openness, in contrast to the current bureaucratic climate of secrecy. And a merit system (instead of the tribal bias, state of origin and nepotism or favoritism, which have colored the landscape) should be adopted in employment and distribution of national resources, etc. More importantly, the leadership must muster the political will to tackle the problem head-on (see report on Second Global Forum on Fighting and Safeguarding Integrity, May 28-31, 1999). Regardless of where it occurs, what causes corruption or the form it takes, the simple fact remains that corruption is likely to have a more profound and different effects in less developed countries, than

in wealthy and developed societies. This is due to a variety of conditions, which cannot deviate significantly from the nature of their underdevelopment (Nye 1967). Because of the corrosive effects of corruption in national development, and given the relative limited resources or poverty in the region, Africa, and indeed Nigeria, can least afford to be corrupt.

The Causes of Corruption

Recently, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), had to relieve some of its officials of their posts because they had taken bribes. And all the commissioners of the European Union (EU), resigned because they, too, had been found to be corrupt beyond acceptable limits. In the United States, Enron Corporation, an energy giant and WorldCom, a telecommunication company, were charged with fraud. The companies 'manipulated their balanced sheets, profit and loss account and tax liabilities.' Enron's accountant, Arthur Andersen, collapsed for greed and fraud as it was charged with obstruction of justice in connection to the Enron probe (Reuters June 27, 2002; The Observer (UK), June 9, 2002). These are tip of the iceberg!

Yet, analysts tend to believe that developed countries are less corruption than developing nations. One of them points out that 'throughout the fabric of public life in newly Independent State...runs the scarlet thread of bribery and corruption...' (Wraith and Simpkins 1963). Another writer notes that it will probably be "difficult to secure [by honest means] a visa to a developing country that would be the subject of a corruption study (Nye 1967).

Why is corruption a viable enterprise in the Third World, nay, Nigeria? The causes of corruption are myriad; and they have political and cultural variables. Some evidence points to a link between 'corruption and social diversity, ethno-linguistic fractionalization, and the proportions of country's population adhering to different religious traditions' (Lipset and Lenz, 2000). And studies note also that corruption is widespread in most non-democratic countries, and particularly, in countries that have been branded 'neo-patrimonial,' 'kleptocratic' and 'prebendal' (NORAD 2000). Thus, the political system and the culture of a society could make the citizens more prone to corrupt activities. However, we shall focus on the fundamental factors that engender corrupt practices in less developed nations, including Nigeria. Some of the factors include:

- 1) Great inequality in distribution of wealth;
- 2) Political office as the primary means of gaining access to wealth;
- 3) Conflict between changing moral codes;
- 4) The weakness of social and governmental enforcement mechanisms; and
- 5) The absence of a strong sense of national community (Bryce, 1921).

The causes of corruption in Nigeria cannot deviate significantly, if at all, from the above factors. However, obsession with materialism, compulsion for a shortcut to

affluence, glorification and approbation [of ill-gotten wealth] by the general public, are among the reasons for the persistence of corruption in Nigeria (Ndiulor, March 17, 1999). It has been noted that one of the popular, but unfortunate indices of good life in Nigeria, is flamboyant affluence and conspicuous consumption. Because of this, some people get into dubious activities, including 'committing ritual murder for money-making.' The cases of ritual murder abound in Nigeria, but a few examples will suffice. A middle-aged woman and an SSS3 female student were reportedly beheaded in Akure, the Ondo State capital recently (ThisDay News, July 7, 2002). Another case was that of the 1996 Clement Duru (alias 'Otokoto') ritual killing episode at Owerri in Imo State. A well-known proprietor of 'Otokoto' hotel, Clement Duru was reported to have been killing and selling the body parts of some of the travelers that checked into his hotel at Owerri. And recently, another incident of ritual killing was reported in the area (see Ogugbuaja, The Guardian, May 16, 2002).

The lack of ethical standards throughout the agencies of government and business organizations in Nigeria is a serious drawback. According to Bowman, ethics is action, the way we practice our values; it is a guidance system to be used in making decisions. The issue of ethics in public sector [and in private life] encompasses a broad range, including a stress on obedience to authority, on the necessity of logic in moral reasoning, and on the necessity of putting moral judgement into practice (Bowman 1991). Unfortunately, many officeholders in Nigeria (appointed or elected) do not unfortunately, have clear conceptions of the ethical demands of their position. Even as corrupt practices are going off the roof, little attention, if any, is being given to this ideal.

Other factors are poor reward system and greed; Nigeria's reward system is, perhaps, the poorest in the world. Nigeria is a society where national priorities are turned upside down; hard work is not rewarded, but rogues are often glorified in Nigeria. As Authur Schlesinger said of America in the 60s, "Our [the] trouble [with Nigeria] is not that our capabilities are inadequate. It is that our priorities - which means our values - are wrong" (Howard (ed.) 1982). And peer community and extended family pressures, and 'polygamous household' are other reasons (Onalaja & Onalaja, 1997). The influence of extended family system and pressure to meet family obligations are more in less developed societies. Lawrence Harrison acknowledged that the extended family system "is an effective institution for survival," but notes that it poses a big "obstacle for development" (1985, p.7).

According to Edward Lotterman, bad rules and 'ineffective taxing system,' which makes it difficult to track down people's financial activities, breed corruption (Pioneer Press, April 25, 2002). Ineffective taxing system is a serious problem for Nigeria. The society should institute appropriate and effective taxing system where everyone is made to explain his or her sources of income, through end-of-the-year income tax filing. The recent ban on importation of Tokumbo (used car) over five years of manufacture, is in our opinion, an example of a bad policy that could breed corruption. If this anti-business ban is not reviewed or discarded completely, it will, as many critics have noted affect the economy, as those making a living in the business will be exposed to poverty, and subsequently, corruption. Businessmen would be forced to bribe the corrupt custom officials (to allow the cars in), causing the state to lose the needed tax revenue. In addition, the policy will divert business to other neighboring countries (The Vanguard, June 4, 2002). To tame corruption, the society should try to get rid of regulations that serve little or no purposes.

The lukewarm attitude of those who are supposed to enforce the laws of the land (judges, police officers and public officials) could lead to people engaging in corrupt behavior, knowing fully well that they would get away with it. Some cultural and institutional factors lead to corruption. For instance, Nepotism and the strength of family values are linked to the feeling of obligation. The work of Robert K. Merton has demonstrated the relationship between culture and corruption (1968). His "means-ends schema" implies that corruption is at times a motivated behavior responding to social pressures to violate the norms, so as to meet the set goals and objectives of a social system.

Lipset and Lenze note that those going through corrupt means (through the back door, so to say), to achieve their objectives have little or no access to opportunity structure. The hindrance to economic opportunity, according to the study, could be a result of their race, ethnicity, lack of skills, capital, material and other human resources. They note "that cultures that stress economic success as an important goal but nevertheless strongly restricts access to opportunities will have higher levels of corruption (2000, pp. 112-117). This probably explains the high incidence of corrupt behaviors in Nigeria. Many Nigerians are highly achievement oriented, but they have relatively low access to economic opportunities. For example many civil servants work for months without getting paid (ThisDay, July 7, 2002; Daily Trust, July 9, 2002). Yet, the society expects them to be honest and productive. Many of those civil servants working without pay are parents, who are expected to train their children in schools with empty wallet. How can they do that? Are they magicians? No! Under this condition, many citizens would reject the rule of the game (societal norms) and criminally innovate to make ends meet.

The 'brazen display of wealth by public officials,' which they are unable to explain the source, points to how bad corruption has reached in the society. Many of these officials before being elected or appointed into offices had little or modest income. But now, they are owners of many properties around the world (ThisDay Online, June 24, 2002). In contrast with the United States, many of the elected officials are known to be modest in living (There are some bad eggs in their midst, but they face the laws when they are found wanting). The 2000 financial disclosure forms released in 2001, which is required annually for all 535 members of Congress (House and Senate members), show that many of them live relatively modest. (The financial forms show sources of outside income, assets, liabilities, speech honoraria donated to charity and travel paid by private interests; by law, honoraria are donated to charity). The main asset of the Senate Majority Leader, Tom Daschle (the nation's highest-ranking Democrat, with direct influence over billions of federal dollars), is "a one-half share in a house in Aberdeen, South Dakota, given by his mother and worth between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in income" (CNN News, June 14, 2001). If he were a Nigerian, he could have owned many million-dollar homes in beautiful areas in London and the United States (all over Nigeria too), and decorated himself with countless traditional titles.

The work of Edward Banfield shows a relationship corruption and strong family orientation. The study, which helped to explain high levels of corruption in southern Italy and Sicily, notes that "corruption is linked to the strong family values involving intense feelings of obligation." That was the case with the Mafia in Italy where some people were seen to have the attitude of "anything goes that advances the interests

of one's self and family" (1958). All these, including bad practices of non-payment or late payment of workers, bad business culture of delays and refusal, or late payment for services executed by business establishments in Nigeria are forms of corruption. These kinds of behaviors have the tendency to scare away foreign and local investors, with tremendous negative effects on the economy (Daily Trust, July 9, 2002).

The Effects of Corruption

The effects of corruption on a nation's socio-political and economic development are myriad. The negative effects impact economic growth as it, among other things, reduces public spending on education (Mauro, 1997; and 1995). Lipset and Lenz note that the effect on growth, is in part, a result of reduced level of investment, as it adds to investment risk (2000). The effect of corruption on education comes from the fact that the government spends relatively more on items to make room for "graft" (Shleifer & Vishny, 1993; Lipset & Lenz, 2002). And corrupt government officials would shift government expenditures to areas in which they can collect bribes easily. Large and hard-to-manage projects, such as airports or highways, make fraud easy. In addition, poverty and income inequalities are tied to corruption (Lipset & Lenz 2000). Development projects are often made unnecessarily complex in Nigeria to justify the corrupt and huge expense on it. The new national stadium in Abuja, which is said to have gulped millions of Naira more than necessary, is a case in point.

Despite the immoral aspect and pernicious effects of corruption, some scholars have argued that corruption can be beneficial to political development or "political modernization" (Pye, March 1965). Political modernization or development means growth in the capacity of a society's governmental structures and processes to maintain their legitimacy over time (presumably in time of social change) by contributing to economic development, national integration and administrative capacity, and so on (Nye 1967). We would not get entangled with the different scales used for measuring political development. Nevertheless, Max Gluckman opined that scandals associated with corruption sometimes have the effect of strengthening a value system of a society as a whole (1955). This is probably true in relation to Nigeria. The scandals associated with the Abacha era (looting of the treasury and human rights violations) have given the nation some food for thought. Nigeria is still perplexed and reoccupied with the issues of how to strengthen the nation's essential governmental structures to avoid the reoccurrence of these kinds of looting and atrocities in future.

In addition, some writers have noted that corruption may help to ease the transition from traditional life to a modern political life. Some have argued that the vast gap between literate official and illiterate peasant, which is often characteristic of the countryside, may be bridged if the peasant approaches the official bearing traditional gifts or their (corrupt) money equivalent. In this respect, McMullan points out that "a degree of low-level corruption" can 'soften relations of officials and people' (July 1961). And Shils notes that corruption can 'humanize government and make it less awesome' (1962). These observations are common occurrences in Nigeria where communities pay political visits to their Governors, Commissioners and top civil servants with cows, wines, cola nuts and money stuffed in 'Ghana must go' (bags) in order to get them attend to their local problems.

The apparent benefits of corruption notwithstanding, we are here mainly concerned with the evils of corruption. Any right thinking person in Nigeria where ubiquitous corruption has ravaged the society will find it impossible to agree that corruption is beneficial, no matter how plausible it may be.

The Evils of Corruption

Many studies have been conducted that show the evils or consequences of corruption. And corruption has taught the Nigeria a dangerous and wrong lesson that it does not pay to be honest, hardworking and law-abiding. Through corrupt means many political office holders acquire wealth and properties in and outside Nigeria; and many display their wealth (which is beyond the means), but the society does not blink. This has made politics a big business in Nigeria, because anything spent to secure a political office is regarded as an investment, which matures immediately one gets into office (The Guardian, July 14, 2002).

Corruption wastes skills as precious time is often wasted to set up unending committees to fight corruption, and to monitor public projects. It also leads to aid forgone. Some foreign donors do not give aid to corrupt nations. For instance, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has withdrawn development support from some nations that are notoriously corrupt. And 'the World Bank has introduced tougher anti-corruption standards into its lending policies' to corrupt countries. Similarly, other organizations such as the Council of Europe and the Organization of American States are taking tough measures against international corruption (OECD, December 1997). Corruption is politically destabilizing, as it leads to social revolution and military takeovers. Most "post-coup rationalizations" in less developed worlds point to corruption. The General Buhari's post-coup broadcast to Nigerians in 1983 is a case in point (Welch, Jr., 1987). But hiding under the excuse of corruption to topple a legitimate government in Nigeria will seize to be a credible reason for the involvement of the military in Nigerian politics in future. This is because many of the previous military leaders in Nigeria were as corrupt, if not more corrupt than the civilian politicians they replaced. Corruption was even blamed for the first 1966 military coup in Nigeria (and that in Ghana too). However, the post-electoral crisis in the Western region and the fear of northern domination of the affairs of Nigeria were other reasons (Wallerstein, March 14, 1966; & Kilson, Jan. 31, 1966).

Corruption causes a reduction in quality of goods and services available to the public, as some companies could cut corners to increase profit margins. Corruption effects investment, economic growth, and government expenditure choices; it also reduces private investment (Mauro 1997). Bribery and corruption, the culture of late payment, delays or refusal of payment for services already done, are according to the Lord Bishop of Guilford, David Peck, scaring away British investors from Nigeria. He notes that those who fail to pay companies for services done seem to forget that the "life blood of any company is its cash flow." And rightly points out that "the price of corruption is poverty" (Daily Trust, July 9, 2002). Because of the widespread of "petty" and "grand" the international business community regard the whole of Africa as a "sinkhole that swallows their money with little or no return" (Callaghy 1994). With the recent changes in the political economy of East Europe, the attention of the business world has been turned to this area where they may reap quicker results from their investments.

One African diplomat could not say it any better: "Eastern Europe is [now] the most sexy beautiful girl, and we [Africa] are an old tattered lady. People are tired of Africa. So many countries, so many wars" (Newsweek Education Program - Fall/1994, 'conflict in Africa'). As we have seen, what is happening in Africa is a blueprint of the problem facing Nigeria. The nation's "unworkable economic policies, blatant corruption..." in fact, the "fossilized system" of government has brought almost everything to a halt (Adams, May/June, 1995). Thus, corruption discourages honest effort and valuable economic activities; and it breeds inefficiency and nepotism. Corruption leads to possible 'information distortion' as it 'cooks the books;' and 'a high level of corruption can make public policies ineffective' (Sen 1999, p.135; also see Reuters' Jessica Hall on WorldCom, June 27, 2002). Above all, corruption can tarnish the image of a country. As we have seen, Nigeria suffers more than most nations from an appalling international image created by its inability to deal with corruption and bribery.

According to one who has lived in Nigeria, becoming corrupt in Nigeria is almost unavoidable, as morality is relaxed, because to survive people have to make money. The 1996 Study of Corruption by Transparency International and Goettingen University ranked Nigeria as the most corrupt nation, among 54 nations listed in the study, with Pakistan as the second highest (Moore 1997, p.4). As this was not too bad enough, the 1998 Transparency International corruption perception index (CPI) of 85 countries, Nigeria was 81 out of the 85 countries pooled (Table A); (Lipset & Lenz 2000; p.113). And in the 2001 corruption perception index (CPI), the image of Nigeria slipped further down south (ranked 90, out of 91 countries pooled), with second position as most corrupt nation, with Bangladesh coming first (Table B).

(Table A)

Corruption Perception Index (1998)

Country	Rank	Country	Rank	Country	Rank
Denmark	1	Namibia	31	Argentina	61
Finland	2	South Africa	32	Nicaragua	62
Sweden	3	Hungary	33	Romania	63
New Zealand	4	Mauritius	34	Thailand	64
Iceland	5	Tunisia	35	Yugoslavia	65
Canada	6	Greece	36	Bulgaria	66
Singapore	7	Czech Republic	37	Egypt	67
The Netherlands	8	Jordan	38	India	68
Norway	9	Italy	39	Bolivia	69
Switzerland	10	Poland	40	Ukraine	70
Australia	11	Peru	41	Latvia	71
Luxembourg	12	Uruguay	42	Pakistan	72

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United Kingdom	13	South Korea	43	Uganda	73
Ireland	14	Zimbabwe	44	Kenya	74
Germany	15	Malawi	45	Vietnam	75
Hong Kong	16	Brazil	46	Russia	76
Austria	17	Belarus	47	Ecuador	77
United States	18	Slovak Republic	48	Venezuela	78
Ireland	19	Jamaica	49	Colombia	79
Chile	20	Morocco	50	Indonesia	80
France	21	El Salvador	51	Nigeria	81
Portugal	22	China	52	Tanzania	82
Botswana	23	Zambia	53	Honduras	83
Spain	24	Turkey	54	Paraguay	84
Japan	25	Ghana	55	Cameroon	85
Estonia	26	Mexico	56		
Costa Rica	27	Philippine	57		
Belgium	28	Senegal	58		
Malaysia	29	Ivory Coast	59		
Taiwan	30	Guatemala	60		

Source (s): The Transparency International Corruption Index, 1998; and Lipset, Seymour & Salman Lenz, "Corruption, Culture, and Markets," (2000), In Culture Matters, Harrission & Huntington (eds.), 2000, p.113

(Table B)

Corruption Index Report (2001)

Country	Rank	Country	Rank	Country	Rank
Finland	1	Tunisia		Guatemala	65
Denmark	2	Slovenia	34	Philippine	
New Zealand	3	Uruguay	35	Senegal	
Iceland	4	Malaysia	36	Zimbabwe	
Singapore	5	Jordan	37	Romania	69
Sweden	6	Lithuania	38	Venezuela	
Canada	7	South Africa		Honduras	71
The	8	Costa Rica	40	India	

Netherlands					
Luxembourg	9	Mauritius		Kazakhstan	
Norway	10	Greece	42	Uzbekistan	
Australia	11	South Korea		Vietnam	75
Switzerland	12	Peru	44	Zambia	
United Kingdom	13	Poland		Cote d'Ivoire	77
Hong Kong	14	Brazil	46	Nicaragua	
Austria	15	Bulgaria	47	Ecuador	79
Israel	16	Croatia		Pakistan	
United States		Czech Republic		Russia	
Chile	18	Colombia	50	Tanzania	82
Ireland		Mexico	51	Ukraine	83
Germany	20	Panama		Azerbaijan	84
Japan	21	Slovak Republic		Bolivia	
Spain	22	Egypt	54	Cameroon	
France	23	El Salvador		Kenya	
Belgium	24	Turkey		Indonesia	88
Portugal	25	Argentina	57	Uganda	
Botswana	26	China		Nigeria	90
Taiwan	27	Ghana	59	Bangladesh	91
Estonia	28	Latvia			
Italy	29	Malawi	61		
Namibia	30	Thailand			
Hungary	31	Dominican Republic	63		
Trinidad & Tobago		Moldova			

Source: The Transparency International Corruption Index, 2001; pp. 234-236

Corruption upsets ethnic balance, and exacerbates problems of national integration in developing countries. For instance, if a corrupt but popular ethnic leader is replaced in his or her position, it 'may upset ethnic arithmetic' and the cohorts may revolt. The social brawl that followed the Moshood Abiola's 1993 elections rebuff is one of the many cases dotting Nigeria's political landscape. Southerners (mainly

Yorubas from his ethnic Southwest) rioted, as they felt they were mistreated by the northern oligarchy. Similarly, some politicians from the northern part of the country seem to have forgotten the atrocities committed by Generals Buhari, Babangida, and Abubakar during their regime (they even refused to testify before the Oputa Panel), because they are their 'home boys.' Any attempt to bring them to justice would lead their cronies to ethnic and social conflicts and possible loss of innocent lives.

Corruption is also destructive of governmental structures and capacity. TheNEWS, in its July 11, 1999 issue *The Face of a Liar*, broke the news of "forgery" and "perjury" committed by the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Ibrahim Salisu Buhari. Through corrupt means, Alhaji Ibrahim Salisu Buhari amassed wealth (he made millions working for NEPA), and bribed his way to the fourth highest position in the land. This scandal dominated the political agenda of Nigeria for some time. It is a national shame that a crook was in-charge of the House of Representatives – the body that makes the laws of the land. What type of laws could he have made for Nigeria? President Olusegun Obasanjo disappointed the world by granting Alhaji Salisu Buhari a state pardon, despite his apparent campaign to transform Nigeria into a corruption-free society (Obasanjo's Inaugural Speech, May 29, 1999). The 'Buharigate,' as the scandal was later called, nearly destroyed Nigeria's democracy-experiment.

Corruption can destroy the legitimacy of a government. The Shehu Shagari administration was written off as inept because of the magnitude of corruption in the administration, and its lack of policy direction (Suberu 1994). Corruption may alienate modern-oriented civil servants and may cause them to reduce or withdraw their service or to leave the country. Corruption is one the reasons for the 'brain drain' phenomenon in Nigeria (talented professionals leaving the country in search of employment some where else). In Nigeria, you can hardly enter an office and get your 'file signed except you drop' some money. Even the security personnel at the door of every office will ask for (bribe) tips? In other words, corruption leads to 'slow moving files that get through the desk of officers once the interested parties have compromised themselves.' It also leads to "missing files that [would] resurface immediately the desk officer is settled," unnecessary bureaucracy and "delays until fees are paid" (Oloja; *The Guardian*, April 21, 2002).

By doling out money to politicians, General Abacha got many of the nation's political class to commit political suicide in 1998. Many of them lined up en masse to proclaim him as a 'dynamic leader' and the only person qualified to lead Nigeria. Similarly, recently many politicians from the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) recently trooped to President Obasanjo's Ota Farm in Ogun State to 'beg him' to run for a second term. Even General Abubakar's visible timidity to address the issue of corruption in Nigeria was alarming and discouraging, as he retained the military officers of accused of looting the national treasury with General Abacha.

However, corrupt military is not peculiar to Nigeria. Juan D. Peron of Argentina and Batista of Cuba, among others, were also known to have deposited their ill accumulated wealth in Swiss banks and other foreign financial institutions, instead of investing the loots in their local economy (Sklar 1965; Lewis, May/June, 1994; Adams 1995). And with brute force Augusto Pinochet of Chile bastardized the nation's economy, and killed many of the people who opposed his regime. During his

Inaugural Speech on May 29, 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo vowed to tackle the menace of corruption in Nigeria. He said: "Corruption will be tackled head-on. No society can achieve its full potential if it allows corruption to become the full-blown cancer it has in Nigeria." And he vowed that "there will be no sacred cows" in his process to stamp out corruption in the society (Inaugural Speech, May 29, 1999). But it is self evident that the corrupt big cows are still walking freely on the streets of Nigeria.

In summary, corruption diverts scarce public resources into private pockets, literally undermines effective governance, endangers democracy and erodes the social and moral fabric of nations. As it has been noted the lust for power and corruption (and 'dash') as gift known in Nigeria, is not strictly a Nigerian problem. Corruption is a global phenomenon and manifest in both 'Petty' and 'Grand' forms. Will it be possible for Nigeria to effectively tame the scourge of corruption in the society?

For Effective Control of Corruption

Some human ailments could require many doses of medicines to be treated. Similarly, the menace of corruption, which has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria, would require all the necessary 'medicines' to effectively control it. In other words, no single and simple remedies will do it; and the problem cannot be solved overnight, because, as we have noted, corruption has been ingrained into the fabric of the society. Nigeria has, in theory, the solutions in the book to tackle corruption; but like other issues (poverty, etc) bedeviling the nation, implementations of the laws are the Achilles heel (a vulnerable point) of the society (The Guardian, July 10, 2002). Similarly, Robert A. Dahl notes that "the Achilles hell of the small state is its military weakness in the face of a large state" (1998, p.112).

One of the authors whose work we reviewed noted (and rightly, we might add), that one of the reasons why the measures against corruption have not been fruitful in Nigeria is that they have "operated at a level [of mere] symbolism" (Osoba 1996). Yes, corruption has defied all measures adopted to combat it in Nigeria, apparently, because those wagging the corruption-wars are themselves corrupt. In the name of turning Nigeria into a corruption-free society, the nation has experimented with many policies. It has tried the judicial commissions of enquiry, the Code of Conduct Bureau. It had wrestled with the Public Complaints Commission to no avail. Also it fiddled with the Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), and the National Open Apprenticeship (NOA), but corruption instead blossomed. Then, General Buhari clobbered Nigerians with his horsewhip branded the War Against Indiscipline Council (WAIC), without success. Now the current civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo has instituted an Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), which seems to have power only over the corrupt poor.

Any society faced with the challenges of corruption will continue to find ways to break the circle. This author has argued elsewhere that Nigeria cannot effectively control the menace of corruption in the nation by merely instituting probe panels. It was suggested that the to tame the surge of corruption in Nigeria, the general population should be re-orientated to a better value system. This is because Nigerians have for long been living on the survival of the fittest and grab-whatever-comes-your-way mentality (Dike, October 6, 1999; Dike, February 5, 2002). The re-

orientation of the youth in Nigeria to a good value system could help in the war against corruption. The World Values Surveys of 1990-1993 has a lot of attitudes and values information, which notes a relationship between values and corruption (World Values Study Group, 1994). Preaching the gospel and practice of virtue is the ultimate solution to behavioral change and reduction in corruption. Their productivity could increase, which would mean enough goods and services, prosperity and economic growth, and which would in turn allow the citizens the 'freedoms' to live a meaningful life.

However, while the Justice Oputa Panel and the Justice Akambi commission were cruising the cities interrogating the poor corrupt individuals involved in 'petty thefts,' the politicians and the known corrupt ex-military Generals have been busy politicking around the nation with money stuffed in their 'Ghana-must go' (bag) unperturbed. But to win the apparent war on corruption in Nigeria, the Obasanjo's slogan of there must 'be no sacred cows' should not be a mere political rhetoric. It should be put into practice by prosecuting all the known corrupt political 'heavy weights' in the society, as they contribute in making the nation's inchoate laws inoperable. As Kanu Agabi, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice noted at a meeting with state commissioners of police,

Some of our leaders are doing everything they can to make the work of the police impossible. Big men are the greatest criminals and except you go after the big criminals and bring them to book, the rate of crime may not reduce. [But] If you bring three or four of these big men to book, the rate of criminal activities would reduce." He declared, "Arrest ministers, arrest [the] big people and others would fear (The Vanguard, 30th March 2002).

But why has President Obasanjo made a deal with the Abacha family if his chief law enforcement officer has such a wonderful idea? He should have used the opportunity afforded by the Abacha saga to show the world that he is serious with his avowed war on corruption. The agreement made by civilian administration with the Abacha family would allow them to keep \$100 million (of the money stolen by the late General), so that they could return about \$1 billion of the loot to the federal government (Dan-Ali, BBC News, May 20, 2002). As many critics have noted, this deal would encourage the many economic opportunists (the die-hards hanging on the fence waiting) to grab whatever government funds they can lay hands on, since the federal government would allow them to keep a part of the money, if and when, they are apprehended.

To win the war on corruption, adherence to ethical standards in decision-making must be the foundation of the nation's policies. Without ethics (set of moral principles or values or principles of conducts governing an individual or a group) - Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1980, p.389, in the conduct of the affairs of the nation (public and business), the apparent wars on corruption in Nigeria will not be successful. In other words, without ethics, any money budgeted toward fighting corruption in Nigeria is a thing cast to the wild cat. Nigeria has to make laws and implement them to the letters. As Aristotle insists, the aim of ethical philosophy is practical - 'to make us better men' - (The Philosophy of Aristotle, Bambrough (ed.), p.280; ThisDay, May 26, 2002). And to win the war on corruption Nigeria has to fortify the institutional 'checks and balances among the country's major social forces and the separation of powers within the government' (Dahl 1998). The nation has to make sure that those entrusted to execute the war on corruption are men and women of virtue - those who recognize and always do what is right. For MacIntyre,

'virtue' is an acquired human quality, the possession and exercise of which enables us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices, and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any of such goods. Virtuous leaders [in government and business] are persons of honesty, integrity and trust (MacIntyre 1981; Liebig 1990; Frankena 1963; Dike 2001, pp.103-104).

Armed with ethics and virtue, the nation should then set out to reduce personal gains to corrupt behavior with tough penalties on the culprits. Making tough rules with vigorous enforcement can deter corrupt behavior. The nation should not grant too much discretionary powers to officers who are in position to grant favor to others (businessmen in particular), such as officer who issue out licenses and passports (These officers often create artificial scarcity to attract bribes from the desperate public). There is the temptation to be corrupt when the officials who have a lot of power are themselves poor (Sen 2000, pp. 275-276).

One of the reasons for the upsurge of corrupt activities in Nigeria is that many Nigerians have not had the chance to live under the rule law, as the society has since independence from Britain in 1960, been under the claws of the military. As Edward De Bono notes in his book, *Future Positive*, "Law and order are a basic part of the fabric of society. Society needs to give a high priority to this aspect of life, because poor quality here downgrades everything else" (1990). The Nigerian police should be upgraded in status, and be well trained, well equipped and well paid (and on time too). The police should become an elite profession, which would be open only to those with good moral character. If the police and other security agents (for instance, customs and the military), will learn and understand their limits (not to harass and kill innocent citizens) and follow the rules, things might improve in Nigeria.

This is not to suggest that upper level officers could not be corrupt. Top bureaucrats with excessive powers could abuse them. Cases abound, but the cases of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha are well documented. The effects of power on those who wield it are well stated in 1887 by Lord Acton, who noted that "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Dahl 1998, p. 73). Before this time a British statesman, William Pitt, observed in a speech that Unlimited power, "is apt to corrupt the minds of those who possess it" (Ibid. p. 73).

The mass media has a crucial role to play in the campaign to educate the people of their rights as citizens, and in exposing the rogues. Nothing chills nonsense more than exposure to thin air. The nation should erect permanent structures in the society to constantly tackle corruption, instead of setting up ad-hoc corruption-panels here and there. The citizens have a role to play in the war against corruption: they should always try to resist the temptation to offer bribes to corrupt government officials, as 'it takes two to tango.'

To deal with corruption in ancient, many bureaucrats were paid a "corruption-preventing allowance" –yang lien- as "incentive to remain clean and law-abiding" (Alatas, 1980; & Klitgaard, 1988). To Amartya Sen a payment system of this kind can help reduce corruption through what he calls its "income effect," as the officer

who gets this payment may be "less in need of making a quick buck." This type of payment will also have what he calls "substitution effect." The officer receiving the payment "would know that corrupt behavior may involve serious loss of a high-salary employment if things were" to go bad (that is, if he or she is caught with his or her hand in the cookie jar) (Sen 2000). In some cases, how people behave in a society depends on how they see and perceive others behave. If the prevailing behavior in a country is bad, others could imitate the behavior. However, the lousy argument would be that "others do the same." This was one of the cited "reasons" for corrupt behavior when the Italian parliament investigated "the linkage between corruption and the Mafia in 1993." Thus, corrupt behavior encourages other corrupt behavior, moreover when the culprits go unpunished. But respect for rules, honest and upright behavior are certainly "bulwark against corruption" in many societies (Sen, 2000, p.277).

Sadly, corruption is now a high-profile issue in Nigeria; and those in political power are the main culprits.

News of corruption always oozes out from the National Assembly, but nobody has been prosecuted. And many of them often engage in frivolous oversea trips (with hordes of cronies and praise-singers) while civil servants in their states go for months without getting paid their salary (the President is also guilty of this). And some are known to have acquired landed properties in the United States and Britain.

However, an Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), presided over by Justice Mustapha Akanbi, has been instituted in Nigeria to fish out those whose hands were tainted while in office in the society. Members of the Commission include, Alhaji Zubairu Mohammed, Hairat Ade Balogun, Pro. Sayeed Hamzat Malik, Alhaji Muhammed Mahmud Maishanu, Alphonso Olufunmilayo Fadaka, Mrs. Salome Audu Jakanda, Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu, Prof. (Mrs.) Uche Modum, Dr. Asikpo Essien-Ibok, Ms. Adeline Elemechi Uwanaka, Gabriel Taimu Aduda, with Peter Eyiamenkue Odili as secretary (Thisday News, June 24, 2002). Now the commission has its bait in the water, but so far it has not landed any big fish. Or, has it caught any fish at all? How far this commission can go to sanitize the already corrupt society remains to be seen.

It is appropriate to emphasize the importance of good and enforceable policies toward controlling corrupt behavior. And policies should be reviewed periodically to close any loophole and to catch-up with events in the society. Toward this, Robert S. McNamara, former president of the World Bank and Ford Motor Corporation, has argued that for any campaign against corruption to be successful in Sub-Saharan Africa, certain characteristics should be common in the plans against corruption. His suggestions on how to control corruption in the region include to:

Require direct, clear and forceful support of the highest political authority: the president or prime minister;

Introduce transparency and accountability in government functions, particularly in all financial transactions;

Encourage a free press and electronic media to forcefully report to the public on corrupt practices in the society;

4) Organize civil society to address the problems of corruption brought to light by the process of transparency and the activity of the media;

5) Introduce into government watch-dog agencies - anti-corruption bureaus; inspectors general; auditors general and ombudsmen [government official appointed to receive and investigate complaints made by individuals against abuses or capricious acts of public officials, etc] - which will identify corruption practices and bring them to public attention;

6) Minimize and simplify government regulations, particularly those involving the issuance of licenses, permits and preferential positions, thereby restricting opportunities for rent seeking by corrupt means.

7) Insert anti-bribery clauses into all major procurement contracts and with the assistance of both international financial institutions and bilateral aid agencies insist that international corporations, bidding on African procurement contracts, accept such clauses and the penalties associated with their violation.

8) Introduce similar anti-bribery clauses into contracts relating to privatization of government enterprises, and the development of natural resources.

9) Ensure that enforcement is predictable and forceful; and

10) To criminalize the acts of bribery; prohibit the deduction of bribes for tax purposes; and erect barriers to transfer to western financial institutions of financial gains derived from corrupt practices (United States Information Agency, Nov 17, 1997).

Other steps authorities could take to control corruption include:

11) Declaration of Assets: The state should require that all high-level Nigerian officials (Presidents, Ministers, Legislative officers, Central bank governors, Police and Customs Chiefs, Military Generals), sign a statement granting permission to banks (both local and foreign), real estate or investment house to disclose any personal assets they may hold. Breaking this veil of secrecy, it has been argued, is crucial if assets declarations are to be verified and accountability enforced (Diamond, 1992);

12) Withholding of Aid: International donors (the IMF and World Bank) can be helpful by cutting off completely distribution of assistance to any country marked for high-level corruption;

13) Scrutiny for sources of income: As was pointed out above, scrutinizing individual depositors of huge sum of money, by financial institutions for sources, would go along way to curbing looting of national treasury by civil servants.

It has been reported that the Commonwealth of Nations have started work on a program that would make it difficult, if not impossible, for banks and other financial institutions to accept monies looted from the national treasury of a Commonwealth member nations. The former scribe of the Commonwealth of Nations, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, disclosed this at Obosi (Anambra State) in January 1999 (The Guardian,

Jan. 2, 1999). The Organization of African Unity (OAU), which recently changed its name to African Union (AU), should emulate other international organizations to work toward stamping out corrupt and dictatorship from its midst. Merely changing its name without a change in ideology is just like putting an old wine into a new calabash.

Conclusion

Many laws are already on the book to fight corruption in Nigeria (including those crafted by the international organizations). But what is important now, as Peter Eigen, chairman of the watchdog group, Transparency International has noted, is "the political will to fight corruption at home..." countries. And as Robert McNamara remarked at the end of the Second Global Forum on Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity at The Hague May 31, 2001, "Every country has to determine its own priorities" on the war against corruption. But each society should "focus on concrete actions that can yield measurable results," and "...publicly report whether results are being achieved" (see Odessey, Washington File Staff Writer, May 31, 2001).

Above all, Nigeria cannot be seen as secure and free until the people's human rights are respected and protected by the government. As Mikhail Gorbachev points out, "...the world cannot be considered secure if human rights are being violated..." 'And more importantly, the world cannot be considered secure if a many people lack the elementary condition for life worthy of man.' Similarly, Nigeria cannot be considered secure if millions of people go hungry, do not have a roof over their heads and to be jobless and sick indefinitely, with "the most basic human right, the right to life is disregarded" (Morrison 1988). Through it all, to tame corruption, Nigeria has to use words as well as actions – a multifaceted approach. However, has Nigeria been monitoring the effectiveness of her many (but not serious) anti-corruption strategies? Finally, good governance, transparency, accountability and the rule of law are the keys to tackling corruption in the society, as corrupt leaders cannot wage an effective war against corruption.

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