

Political Corruption in Nigeria: Theoretical Perspectives and Some Explanations

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ABSTRACT Corruption has been the bane of legitimacy, democratic stability and socio-economic and political development in Nigeria. Indeed, any attempt to understand the tragedy of development and the challenges to democracy in Nigeria must come to grips with the problem of corruption and stupendous wastage of scarce resources. All attempts by successive regimes to nip the problem in the bud have failed. With the benefit of hindsight, virtually all the Nigerian leaders who have come in as physicians have left office as patients. What factors precipitate political corruption and why has corruption become endemic and intractable in Nigeria? The paper interrogates corruption in Nigeria through the prisms of Clientelism, Prebendalism, Patrimonialism, Neopatrimonialism, Soft State thesis and the theory of Two Publics. The article contends that these theories for a very long time have not only provided credible theoretical frameworks for the understanding of the development tragedy in Africa in general but also of the pandemic and seemingly insoluble problem of political corruption in Nigeria in particular. However, as a point of departure, the paper argues that rather than fattening the primordial public, the 'robberies' that have taken place at the civic public have further pauperized the primordial public, if fattening in this sense is taken to mean social and economic development. The paper further provides some further explanations for the endemic political corruption in Nigeria. The paper concludes that there is the need to demystify ethnicity and address the problem of citizenship in order to alter in a positive manner, the average citizens' psycho-political conception of the Nigerian state and thus reduce corrupt tendencies.

INTRODUCTION

Any attempt to understand the tragedy of development and the challenges to democracy in most developing countries (Nigeria inclusive), must come to grips with the problem of corruption and stupendous wastage of scarce resources. This is not to suggest that corruption and prodigality are peculiar to the developing countries. Certainly, corruption is neither culture specific nor system bound. It is ubiquitous. However, the severity and its devastating impact vary from one system to the other. The impact is undoubtedly more severe and devastating in the developing world with weak economic base, fragile political institutions and inadequate control mechanisms.

Nigeria today is at a critical stage since independence. The country faces a severe crisis in its economic, social and political development that is not unconnected to the problem of pandemic corruption. The manifestations of the crises are clear, the remedies much less so. Therefore, for a country awakening to democracy after long years of military authoritarianism, endemic corruption and stupendous wastage

pose greater challenges. Since 1999 when the country returned to civil rule, there is no doubt that corruption has been the bane of democratic stability and survival. News about corruption is no longer stunning. This vindicates consistent rating of Nigeria by Transparency International (TI), the global watchdog on corruption, as one of the most corrupt nations in the world. All anticorruption strategies by the various successive governments have had trifling impacts.

The pathological effects of corruption-democratic instability, low level of governmental legitimacy, voracious poverty, infrastructural decay, electoral crisis, contract killing, political assassination, insecurity and generally, developmental problems- have been very devastating. Regrettably, those who claim to be the right physicians, as the previous and current revelations have shown, have come out as patients. The questions are- how is political corruption explained in Nigeria? What are the precipitating factors? And why has all the measures designed to nip the problem in the bud failed? To answer these questions, the paper discusses the problem of political corruption in Nigeria within the

frameworks of patrimonialism, neopatrimonialism, clientelism, soft state thesis and the theory of two publics. The paper submits, that there is interconnection between the citizenship question, nature and character of the Nigerian state and endemic and persistent political corruption ravaging the country. Importantly, the paper contends, contrary to the popular theoretical thinking, that the 'robbery' at the public realm further pauperizes the primordial realm rather than strengthening it.

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The systematic study of corruption is hampered by the lack of an adequate definition (Peters 1978, Johnston 1991, Brinkerhoff 2000, Izibili and Aiya 2007). Studying corruption, writes Johnston (1991:48), is a tricky business as he comments that

Definitions are controversial, and solid evidence is often elusive. Descriptive accounts may be clouded by self-serving equivocations. Equally subtle is the question of the significance of a corrupt act- not only its consequence, but also its meaning as perceived by citizens and officials alike.

However, for clarity and analytical simplicity, Peters (1978) identified three (dimensional) approaches to the definition of political corruption. These are definitions based on legal criteria, public opinion and public interest. From the legal perspective, political corruption is connected to any behavior that violates some formal standard or rule of behavior set down by a political system for its public officials. For example, Nye (1967:419) conceives political corruption to mean an act 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 role -regarding influence". This perspective has suffered serious criticisms. Jackson et-al (1994: 55-56) notes that an illegal act may not be corrupt. They further asserted that;

Worse still, using law as the standard of corruption supports the assertion that everything that is not legal is permitted. The legal foundation of political corruption is simultaneously too narrow and too broad, excluding too much (the unethical but legal) and including too much (the illegal but not unethical).

Critics argue that in many societies the law lacks legitimacy and consistent meaning, which legalisms depict little about the social significance of behavior, and that public opinion or cultural standards are best for building realistic definition(s) of corruption (Peters and Welch 1978).

Therefore, a political system is said to be corrupt, according to the second perspective, when the weight of public opinion perceives it so. This perspective is also fraught with certain limitations in that one must be able to demarcate the boundary between elite opinion and public opinion. What is taken to be public opinion in many societies is oftentimes the opinion of the elites. Since public opinion determines what law becomes and what dictates the public interest, it has a claim to be the final test for corruption (Jackson et-al 1994). This idea is credible because corruption, like "obscenity is more readily condemned than defined or explained" (Robert 1987: 11)

Another classic perception of corruption is that of Rogow and Lasswell (1963: 132-133). For them corruption is taken to be a violation of the public interest. This definition is also laden with ambiguities because public interest like public opinion is difficult to determine. Critics maintained that "while agreeing that the public interest can play an important part in the self-understanding of any polity, it is not the sharpest instrument for pinpointing misdeeds that constitute corruption". In a broader perspective, Brinkerhoff (2000: 241) sees corruption as "subsuming a wide variety of illegal, illicit, irregular, and/or unprincipled activities and behaviours". From this perspective corruption then, is importantly a moral, political and legal issue.

In this context corruption is a multidimensional concept that has legal, social, political, economic and ethical connotations. It comes in various forms and dimensions. It is simply conceived in this work as misuse or improper use of power and influence, deliberately and consciously for personal aggrandizement or group advantage. In this sense, corruption connotes the abuse of public roles or resources, or the use of illegitimate forms of political power and influence, by public or private parties. Conceived in this manner, corruption is inextricably tied (but not limited) to politics, more especially if politics is defined from Harold Lasswell tradition of "who gets what, when and how" and perhaps how

much. The struggle over resources otherwise known as the “national cake” in the Nigerian society has taken a debilitating dimension permitting all forms of corruption. Every political issue is tied to who gets what, when and how. The idea that the “national cake” is meant to be shared rather than baked, by the various ethnic groups that constitute Nigerian federation provides a fertile ground for the kleptomaniac elites who are obsessed to siphoning the public fund. It also, coupled with the problems of identity and citizenship, which will later be discussed, makes all attempts to stem the tide of corruption difficult if not impossible. This position can not be established without a proper understanding of the theoretical discourses and the linkage between the nature and character of the Nigerian state and political corruption.

CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The state is central to any analysis of corruption in Africa. Indeed, there is virtually no subject that one considers in Africa without emphasizing the role of the state (Osaghae 1988:298). This is so because the state not only leads, it also embodies the society in Africa. One fundamental fact to note from the onset is that the Nigerian state, like most African states and Third World countries is a product of colonialism. It is not surprising therefore that many theorists of African politics trace the problem of political corruption to the debauchery of colonial rule (Ekeh 1975, 1985; Osaghae 1988).

Among the theories of African politics that has helped in the understanding of Africa’s predicaments, and more importantly the issue of endemic corruption, include theory of two publics developed by Peter Eke, Prebendalism popularized by Richard Joseph and Gurnal Myrdal’s soft state thesis. Others have captured Africa as a rentier, Patrimonial and Neo-patrimonial state. These theories are credible not only in the understanding of the state and its predicaments in the African countries but also in providing important explanations for the pandemic corruption ravaging African countries.

For instance, Ekeh (1975, 1985) argued that one of the most striking impacts of colonialism was the emergence of two public realms, the primordial and civic public realms which, related differently with the private realm in terms of

morality. For Nigeria, and generally for Africa, Ekeh (1975) has argued; only rights (i.e. benefits) are expected from the state by its citizens, who owe duties (responsibilities) to a native sector. The former forms the basis of an “amoral civic public realm”, and the latter a “moral primordial public realm”. Therefore, the civic public realm was associated with illegitimate and exploitative colonial rule and had no moral linkages with the private realm. It was an amoral public realm in which cheating the system was considered a patriotic duty (Ifidon 1996:102). The result is that as the same actors operate in the two realms, the state apparatus is employed to fatten the nest of the primordial public, thereby making corruption, nepotism and ethnicity to mention a few the hallmark of the civic public (Osaghae 1988: 303). According to Ekeh (1975: 108),

A good citizen of the primordial public gives out and asks for nothing in return; a lucky citizen of the civic public gains from the civic but enjoys escaping giving anything in return whenever he can. But such a lucky man would not be a good man were he to channel all his lucky gains to his private purse. He will only continue to be a good man if he channels part of the largesse from the civic public to the primordial public. That is the logic of the dialectics. The unwritten law of the dialectics is that it is legitimate to rob the civic public in order to strengthen the primordial public.

The “acme of the dialectics”, according to Ekeh (1975:110) is corruption which takes two dimensions- the embezzlement of public fund from the civic public and the solicitation and acceptance of bribes from individuals seeking services provided by the civic public by those who administer these services.

Though Ekeh’s thesis has provided for some time, a sound framework for understanding the impact of colonialism on Africa, and the explanatory framework for the endemic corruption ravaging the continent, it is important to note that the robbery in the civic public was not, neither is it currently employed to strengthen the primordial public but rather further pauperize it. In fact, the primordial sentiment is nothing but an instrument of political deception, trickery and manipulation in the hands of the privileged political and bureaucratic elite for personal aggrandizement and less for group benefits. With the benefit of hindsight, most of the stolen state wealth has been siphoned abroad by the political class to acquire estates in developed

countries, buy chieftaincy titles across the country and establish a “political empire”. Though some of the ill gotten wealth may trickle down to the primordial public in this process, as Ekeh also documented, it is undoubtedly insignificant to strengthen it, more particularly if strengthening in this sense is construed in terms of social, economic and political development. The parlous state of development in African states and communities is a testimony to this fact. High level of illiteracy and crippling poverty; the prevalence of preventable diseases and so on are evidences that the primordial public is at the receiving end of all corrupt practices. Ironically, the primordial public provides a safe haven for the *milito-bureaucratic* and political elite who are obsessed to stealing public funds.

Thus, these *milito-bureaucratic* and political elite now constitute a socio-political cult, gang or group with distinct character in Nigeria. The politico- bureaucratic public has elitist character which have “unlimited” access to the state wealth. They are found in every sector and among all the ethnic groups constituting the Nigerian state and are monolithic in outlook. The ideology and philosophy of these political gangsters can be simply stated thus- wherever you see the state wealth, steal it. They are bonded and cemented by common atrocities and fierce contest in the bid to outsmart one another in the pilfering business, generate conflicts and instability in the society. As powerful as they are, they constitute a fragment of the society with both local and international connections. Right from independence, political power has been oscillating among these group and their *anointed children*. This they strive to protect and further consolidate by politicizing ethnicity and religious identity. The fact that they constitute a cult in Nigerian politics is incontestable.

Few scholars are likely to dispute Richard Joseph’s linking of corruption and the fall of the Nigerian Second Republic to the prebendalisation of state power. In what seem to be a re-characterization of Ekeh’s theory, Joseph contends that “The politics of competition over allocation of resources, or what in Nigeria is called ‘the national cake’, has its most dire consequences the transformation of the offices of the state into prebends...” According to the theory of prebendalism, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by office holders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups.

While clientelism and prebendalism might be

mutually reinforcing, these concepts have separate meanings. Clientelism defines the nature of individual and group relationships within the broader social and political space, but prebendalism are essentially a function of the competition for, and appropriation of the offices of the state (Seteolu 2005). “Clientelism assists to understand the mechanism of (how) class control legitimizes the lopsided distribution of resources among social groups and enhances the status of the political elite” (Seteolu 2005: 36). Therefore, Nigerian political culture is hinged on clientelism and prebendal politics which further enhance our understanding of the prevalence of political corruption. The pursuit of politics is intended to appropriate the political space and resources among fractions of the political elite (Post and Vickers cited in Seteolu 2005:36)

The Nigerian state also has a patrimonial and neo-patrimonial character. Patrimonialism means that the distinctions between the public and the private domains have become blurred and power, which has become a major source of wealth, has become personalized. Within this framework of analysis, the behaviour of political elite in Africa is linked to traditional value system. The African society is patriarchal where political power is personalized, and leadership is permanent in the context of self-recruited oligarchy (Seteolu 2005). According to Seteolu,

These socially imbibed values are replicated in the political terrain where contending coalitions accumulate resources to offset side payments required to retain or expand followership in the context of power politics. The fierce struggle in the public space is linked to conflicts that characterize leadership succession in traditional political systems and the attractions of political control where party politics guarantee access to wealth and economic power.

Therefore, the political elite use social identities such as ethnicity for particularistic purpose. The ethnic identity becomes a mobilizing mechanism to access political power, consolidate dominance and economic control (Dudley 1973; Osaghae 1995). Consequently, it is not impossible for power to be used for personal or group aggrandizements. In patrimonial societies, corruption seems to be intrinsically part and parcel of the political culture.

Neopatrimonialism, a related term to prebendalism and new form of patrimonialism is a term

used to describe and explain state failures in Africa. It is used to describe patrons using state resources in order to secure the loyalty of clients in the general population, and is indicative of informal patron-client relationships that can reach from the very high up in state structures down to individuals in the lower levels (like in the small villages). "As a result of that kind of patron-client or identity politics, Nigeria has regularly been one of the lowest ranked nations for political transparency by Transparency International (TI) in its corruption perception Index" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neopatrimonialism>).

With such politicization of primordial rivalries, the political class and opportunistic bureaucrats found a safe sanctuary to embezzle and squander state resources. The problem of corruption therefore, is inextricably tied to the problem of identity and the problem of citizenship. It is rooted in the psycho-political perception of Nigeria by an average Nigerian. The problem is also rooted in history. For example in 1947, Obafemi Awolowo one of the foremost nationalists (cited in Coleman 1986: 320) wrote,

Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no "Nigerians" in the sense as there are "English", "Welsh", or "French". The word "Nigerian" is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.

In 1948 Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, (cited in Coleman 1986:320) a leader of the Northern Peoples Congress was quoted as having said that,

Since 1914 the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their backgrounds, in their religious beliefs and customs and do not show themselves any sign of willingness to unite ... Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country.

In a similar vein, Adebayo (1999:137-158) also portrays ethnic relations in Nigeria as "cohabitation without marriage". Thus, while a Nigerian nationality is non-existent properly speaking citizenship is operative at the homeland level (Ifidon 1996:102). Taiwo (1996: 15-16 cited in Idowu 1999:77) provided a critical insight on the nature of citizenship in Nigeria. According to him, the existence of the legal cum political conception of citizenship in Nigeria is queasy. In his words,

Beyond phrase-mongering, there are no citizens in Nigeria, only citizens of Nigeria... That

is, Nigerian citizenship is merely geographical, it is without moral-ideological content... part of what typifies citizenship, especially in the modern state, is the de-emphasising of geography and other natural facts in its composition... the freedom to locate anywhere within the boundaries of the relevant geo-polity is non-existent in Nigeria.

Undoubtedly, there is absence of genuine citizenship sentiment at the national level. Hence the struggle and agitation for political representation by the various ethnic groups are meant to secure access to the common wealth. Therefore, the idea of federal character principle entrenched in section 14 sub-sections 3 and 4 of the 1999 constitution and the idea of rotational or zoning arrangements (popular among the political parties), besides ensuring sense of national belonging and the promotion of national unity, has embedded corrupt tendencies. The fact is that it is not genuinely invoked. It was designed not only to settle group conflicts over the distribution of resources or promote a sense of belonging to the nation but primarily to create access to the state wealth by the few privileged elite who see the state wealth as belonging to none. In one word, zoning formula and federal character principle are elitist in form and content. In Nigeria today, the success of an ethnic group or a politician is synonymous with the level of access of such group to state resources, defined in term of the number of political appointments such group is able to secure in the political arrangement. This to a large extent also, in the common erroneous thinking in Nigeria, determines the group percentage share of the national cake. Therefore, to steal from the common wealth is an acceptable norm. It was a misconception that this is used to fatten the primordial public. Contrarily, it has only been used to further fatten the purse of the politico-bureaucratic elite at the peril of the primordial public.

The privileged elite have successfully disillusioned the psyche of the masses with the virus of ethnicity, even to the extent that when corrupt acts are unveiled and the perpetrator(s) are under probe, it is customary in Nigeria to associate such probe with ethnic politics. And question such as – How many Hausa, Ibo or Yoruba are under probe or how many have been punished are not uncommon. The question would not be how many Yoruba/Hausas/Ibos as the case may be are involved in corrupt acts. Virtually anything in Nigeria can be ethnicized. This perhaps

explains why corruption has remained endemic despite all efforts to curtail it. Consequently, sanctioning offenders have become problematic.

Thus, Gurnal Myrdal soft state thesis becomes very apt in Nigeria. In Gurnal Myrdal's soft state thesis, propounded in the light of the Asian experience, we come to grips with the paradox of the post-colonial state and its predicaments, most especially as it relates to the problem of corruption. A soft state whether democratic or undemocratic is bedeviled with the inability to institute reforms or enforce social discipline. It is a state where the legal system and its paraphernalia are moribund or at least ineffective. Even when framing policies, the authorities (under the control of politico-bureaucratic elite) are reluctant to place obligations on the people, especially in matters of corruption (Myrdal 1968: 101). A soft state, according to Golthorpe (1975: 265)

...is one in which formal rules (laws, officially stated administrative rules and practices, etc) are applied copiously and in a lax manner rather than vigorously and consistently...it is one in which private advantage can be gained and private bargains struck concerning the enforcement or non-enforcement of the rules, as when a businessman bribes a tax official...Besides money, another inducement is kinship sentiment and another is the favour of superiors

Therefore, one of the damaging consequences of the politics of identity is that it tends to render the state soft. Laws are discriminately applied and the anti-corruption laws are not an exception. Therefore, one of the characters of a soft state is its over-permissiveness of corruption and corrupt acts.

In conclusion, it is not improper to x-ray corruption in Nigeria through the prisms of prebendalism, clientelism, patrimonialism, neopatrimonialism, soft state thesis and the theory of two publics. However, the point of departure is the argument that robbery and the profligacy in the public sector have further pauperized the primordial public rather than fattening it. The stolen wealth circulates among the milito-bureaucratic and political elite irrespective of their regional, religious or ethnic identities. The consequence of which is deposterous and counterproductive.

OTHER FACTORS EXPLAINING PANDEMIC CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Corruption is multidimensional and multifari-

ous and so the approaches to it. According to Klitgaard (1991: 90),

Some ancient authors attributed official corruption to greed. The 14th century Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun blamed it on the passion for luxurious living within the ruling group. Others have ascribed corruption to particular cultures (be they dictatorial, personalistic, gift giving) or peoples. Still others have pointed out that corruption tends to be most prevalent when social norms are in flux or breakdown, and during booms and busts. Corruption has been blamed both on too much capitalism and competition and on too little; on colonialism and on the withdrawal of the colonial powers; on traditional regimes and on the breakdown of traditions.

All of these except none could explain corruption in Nigeria. Other variables that may help to explain endemic corruption in Nigeria includes the politics of godfatherism. Godfatherism, in a broad sense, is an ideology which is constructed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who gets party ticket to run for an election and who wins in an electoral contest (Gambo 2006:88). It is the tradition of looking for a political father to help promote one's political aspirations. Ayoade (2006:83) apt description of the *modus operandi* of godfatherism is worth quoting in *extenso*,

The godfather is not in the business of philanthropy ...The godfather gives support to install the godson oftentimes by devious antidemocratic means... They are merchants of fear. They dispense violence freely and fully on those who stand in their way. In this they play the additional role of Warlord. They establish, train and maintain a standing personal "army" which they ostensibly supplement with a sprinkling of the official police detachment. In order to effect electoral change, they bribe election officials to deliver the wining election figures. They also bribe the police and other security agents to look the other way when they traffic in ballot boxes and sack opponents strongholds. The godson, having taken office, returns the gesture hundredfold to the point that the godfather becomes an "intractable parasite" on government. The initial support given by the godfather then becomes an investment with a colossal rate of returns because the godfather becomes the 'de facto' governor.

The situation is so worse to the extent that some political office holders who have been accused of self-enrichment and mismanagement of public fund associated their ordeal with the politics of godfatherism. For instance Senator Chimaroke Nnamani while responding to Journalists on 124 count charge on conspiracy, money laundering and corrupt enrichment against him was quoted in the Vanguard newspapers of Saturday February 16, 2008 as saying that he was “a victim of machination and failed political relationship”. The implication is that, though he was guilty of corruptly enriching himself, he would not have been caught, exposed or prosecuted if he had been in the good book of the godfather(s).

What is important here is the consequence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics. To the godfathers, electoral politics is one huge investment opportunity with considerable promise of massive returns (Gambo 2006:88-89). Associated with the problem of godfatherism in Nigerian politics is the high cost of election, greed and avarice. Equally significant is the failure of electoral democracy to institutionalize a procedurally legitimate government thereby promoting the politics of pay-off and settlement as strategies for legitimacy engineering. Some well meaning individuals or influential politicians or opinion makers needed to be bought up with cash reward or through award of undeserving and over-inflated contracts for the incumbent to enjoy relative peace and legitimacy. This has rendered corruption intractable in Nigeria. Added to this is the weak legal framework and low opportunity cost for corruption. The moral cost and the legal cost of corruption in Nigeria equals zero. This is so because the society sanctions it. This has prompted Maduagwu (1996:19) to assert, though debatable, that “No Nigerian will be ashamed, let alone condemned by his people, because he or she is accused of being corrupt”.

In Nigeria, the punishment prescribed by law for a common man that stole a goat that cost less than a thousand naira is stiffer than the punishment meted to public officer that stole millions of naira. For instance while an 18 year old Samson Atayero was sentenced to 3 months imprisonment by an Osogbo Magistrate court for stealing clothes and sandals valued at five thousand three hundred naira (Odesola 2008: 8), Tafa Balogun, the former Nigerian Police boss who stole a whopping sum of 17billion naira

bagged six months imprisonment (Ogundiya: 2006). Others like Chuba Okadigbo and Adolphus Wabara and Patricia Olubunmi Etteh escaped the wrath of the law. For Klitgaard (1991:90) “it is reasonable to posit that an official undertakes a corrupt action when in his judgments, its likely benefits outweigh its likely costs”. Poor reward system, avarice and greed, Nigerians’ consumption attitude and love for mundane things and absence of social security for public officers and political office holders after expiration of tenure are other explanatory factors. The list is perhaps not exhaustive.

CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: THE TREND, THE MAGNITUDE, THE CONSEQUENCES

Corruption is a huge challenge in the public administration in Nigeria. It is at the core of the crisis of governance and legitimacy, the establishment of a stable democratic order, rule of law, development and the welfare of citizens. Of all forms of corruption, political corruption has remained a major obstacle to national progress in Nigeria. Corruption is indeed the major explanation for the seemingly insolvable problem of poverty, diseases, hunger and general acute development tragedy in Nigeria. It has also “seriously impeded the growth and effective utilization of resources in Africa” (Egbue 2007)

From its mild manifestation in the 60s, corruption grew rapidly at an alarming rate during the Second Republic (Aiyede 2006). For instance, Bangura (1986: 31) aptly described Shagari administration (1979-83) as “the government of the contractors by the contractors and for the contractors”. At the end of the Second Republic, the probe panel set up by the General Buhari military administration found many government officials and state governors guilty of diversion, mismanagement and misappropriation of public funds. Several millions of naira was siphoned out of the country, several millions squandered and several others unaccounted for. Federal Government White papers of the report of Justices Sampson Uwaifo and Mohammed Bello Review Panels (1986) are eloquent testimonies.

Compounded during the several years of military misrule, corruption became “institutionalized and assaulted every facet of the country’s political and socio-economic life” (Aiyede 2006:37). It is so pervading and ravenous to the extent that it became the major explanation

for all military coups and authoritarian takeovers in the country. Paradoxically, many of the supposedly corrective regimes became entangled in and epitomized corruption, the same reason for which they took over power. Stupendous wastage of human and material resources became the order of the day. During the Babangida autocratic regime for instance, corruption was raised to the level of state policy and allegation of corrupt practices were treated with utmost levity destroying all the achievement of the previous administration. Corrupt politicians that were jailed by his predecessor- General Muhammadu Buhari - had their cases reviewed. Some were released and some had their sentences reduced. During this period, corruption became an instrument of regime legitimation and stability. Gboyega (1996:5) has this to say,

The benign treatment of corruption in the early years of the Babangida administration foretold a much more conscious instrumental use of corruption to ensure regime stability. For a military administration, Babangida's government was unique in its unconcern about corruption within its rank and among public servants generally; it was as if the Government existed so that corruption might thrive.

Some of the worse offenders who were found guilty and were serving various jail terms were released from prison on the guise of Babangida's human right posture. Furthermore, all the ill-gotten wealth and properties earlier confiscated were returned to the corrupt politicians (see detail in Gboyega 1996:11). This was done under the Forfeiture of Assets (Release of certain Forfeited Properties, etc) Decrees NO 24 and 50 of 1993. To sustain and boost the regime's legitimacy, Babangida made even more extensive pay-offs to various groups of people and organizations in the civil society. These includes: Ecumenical Cathedral Abuja, 50million Naira; Obafemi Awolowo Foundation, 30million Naira; Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria, 20 million Naira; Zik Hall Zungeru, 40million Naira; Arewa House Kaduna 35million Naira; Yakubu Gowon Centre 30million Naira; Nigerian Union of Journalists National Secretariat Abuja 30million Naira; Nigeria Labour Congress Secretariat Building Fund 50million Naira among several others (Committee for Defence of Human Rights 1992:35). Other cases of corruption and crass state profligacy under Babangida's administration was reported in The News Magazine of December 20,

1993 which includes mismanagement of \$2billion Gulf oil windfall in 1991; 400million Naira wasted on the Better Life Project, \$200million siphoned from the Aluminum Project and other colossal corruption at all level of government too numerous to mention. Such was the level of corruption and state profligacy under Babangida autocratic rule that Achebe's (1960:29) trenchant description of the Nigerian state became more relevant and forceful in 1993 than it was in 1960. According to him, "In Nigeria the government is 'they'. It had nothing to do with you or me. It was an alien institution and people's business was to get as much from it as they could without getting into trouble".

By 1993, it had become clear to the public that Babangida's loyalists were being enriched at their peril and consequently, the government had ceased to enjoy the stamp of public validation. If there was any support left for Babangida at this period, it was because of his promise to hand over power to a democratically elected government in 1993, and when his government annulled the June 12 presidential election, his government contracted and collapsed.

The Abacha regime was the most illegitimate, reckless and ruinous regime Nigeria ever had in its political history. Though he vowed to fight corruption by constituting Failed Bank Tribunal and inaugurated War against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC), Abacha was an icon of corruption. After his demise in office the revelations were staggering. In Abuja alone, the army general was asked to forfeit six ultra-modern buildings worth millions of naira. In addition, his family was asked to return \$625,263,187.19 and over 75million British Pounds and another 100million naira illegally acquired to the state. This is not inclusive of 250million naira and a total of 96.9 million naira forfeited to the Nigerian state by his sons- Mohammed Sani Abacha and Abdulkadir Abacha respectively. Until his death in the Presidential Villa in Abuja, Abacha nursed and promoted corrupt practices to hold on to power. Pay offs and undue reward to the regime loyalist became the order of the day. Among those who enjoyed the General Abacha's wanton generosity, unmeritorious gift and prodigality included Chief Anthony Ani to the tune of DM30million and US \$3million; Alhaji Bashir Dalhatu US \$5million gift from late General Sani Abacha held in a London Account and Alhaji Abdulazeez Arisekola Alao 100million naira gift

from Abacha (FGN 1999, Decree 53). The list is frightening,

AbdulSalam Abubakar who took over after the death of Abacha and who exposed the late General corrupt deeds hurriedly organized a transition programme and handed over the mantle of leadership of the country to a former General and one time military head of state between 1976-1979, Olusegun Obasanjo.

Obasanjo laid the foundation of his civilian administration on the vociferous campaign and determination to eliminate corruption in the public life. He proposed and later signed Anticorruption bill into law. He established two anti-graft commissions, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). Despite this, corruption has continued to grow like a wild flame of fire. For example, questions bordering on corruption have created serious instability in the upper and lower legislative House. From 1999 when the country returned to electoral democracy, the leadership in the Senate and the House of Representative has not been stable. Chief Evans Enwerem, Chuba Okadigbo and Adolphus Nwabara were impeached on account of mismanagement and corrupt enrichment. For instance, Senator Idris Kuta led panel that investigated the allegation of corruption against Senator Chuba Okadigbo found out among others that he was involved in the inflation of the street light project to the tune of 173million naira; authorized the payment of 37.2million naira to furnish the Senate president's residence, an amount above the approved 25million; installed and commissioned a 100KVA generating set at the Senate President's residence at an inflated price of 15million naira. Adolphus Wabara, also an impeached senate president was also guilty of receiving bribe of 55million naira from Professor Osuji (the former education Minister) to inflate the budgetary allocation to education ministry. Senator Chimaroke Nnamani also faced about 124 count charges of fraud, conspiracy, concealment and money laundering totaling about 5.4billion naira (Vanguard newspaper Saturday February 16, 2008). Madam Patricia Etteh, the first female Speaker of House of Representatives, resigned following her indictment over the misappropriation of public funds in multiple contracts of N628m (US\$5 million) for the renovation of her official residence and the purchase of 12 official cars. Corruption has no serious legal or political cost in Nigeria. The moral cost has even limited and unfettering impact.

Patricia Etteh and so many others have not been prosecuted in the court of law.

The Executive arm is not spared. The Senate Committee pronounced Vice President Atiku Abubakar guilty on the allegation that he diverted US \$145million Petroleum Technology Development Fund. The report said,

The Vice President abused his office by aiding or abetting the diversion of public funds in the sums of \$125million and \$20million respectively approved for the specific projects of deposits in banks, some of which were fraudulently converted as loans to NDTV, Mofas Shipping Company limited and Transvari Services Limited.

Despite being pronounced guilty, Atiku Abubakar was allowed to contest the 2007 Presidential elections. The case has never been prosecuted in any court of law. Another example of widespread corruption at the executive arm was the report of the Auditor General of the Federation in 2003 which revealed pervasive financial irregularities, over invoicing, scam and colossal waste of public resources in the 2001 Federation Account (Jibrin 2003:8). As at the moment of writing, widespread corruptions are being unveiled by different Committees set up by the National House of Representatives to investigate the implementation of contracts awarded by the administration of Olusegun Obasanjo- the president who claimed to have spent his eight years in office fighting corruption.

From the sampled cases, it is evident without fear of contradiction that in Nigeria corruption has become the defining variable in the determination of who gets what, when and how. Despite the vociferous campaign and political rhetoric, corruption has continued unabatedly in the country. What account for the policy failures? Though some explanations have been provided in the previous sections, it is expedient at least, for clarity to provide further explanations.

ANTICORRUPTION POLICIES IN NIGERIA: WHY HAVE THEY FAILED?

The fact that corruption is anathema to all forms of development is not elusive to the successive Nigerian rulers both military and civilian. What was astonishing is the fact that most of them (the Nigerian rulers) that came in as physicians have come out as patients. From 1960 to date several measures and approaches to

eradicate corruption have been employed. These include institutional approach, constitutional engineering or legal approach, the use of propaganda and political education approach.

The legal or constitutional cum institutional approaches includes the promulgation of Decrees during the military era; Acts of Parliament during the civil rule periods and establishment of institutions empowered by the law to arrest and prosecute corrupt officials. Among such Decrees are Corrupt Practices Decree of 1975, The Public Officer (Investigation of Assets Decree No 5 of 1976), Forfeiture of Assets, and ETC. (Certain Persons) Decree No 53 of 1999. Other measures during the military era included the use of Tribunal like the Failed Bank Tribunal set up by Abacha military government and a host of others. Constitutional measures include the Code of Conduct Bureau and the Code of Conduct Tribunals provided for in the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions (see Fifth Schedule Part 1 of 1999 Nigerian Constitution). Political education or propaganda have also been employed like Ethical Revolution between 1979-83, War against Indiscipline introduced by the duo of Generals Muhammad Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon 1983-85, War against Indiscipline and Corruption implemented by General Sani Abacha 1993-1998 and National Orientation Agency under the civilian administration of Olusegun Obasanjo. Other measures to deter corruption from 1999 when the country returned to electoral democracy to date are the establishment of Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) (these two bodies are empowered by law to investigate, arrest and prosecute suspected corrupt public office holders and political appointees); the introduction of Due Process in all the federal Ministries and parastatals. All these including the various socio-economic and political reforms have been designed to short circuit the menace of corruption in the country. Despite these measures, the country has consistently occupied one of the topmost positions among the most corrupt nations in the world. The persistence of the problem is an indication that constitutional engineering, institutional approach and socio-economic reforms have proved to be inadequate panacea to the problem. This requires some further explanations aside from the theoretical elucidation that have been earlier presented.

Apart from the nature and character of the Nigerian state and the problem of ethnicity, that provided a fertile ground for corruption to thrive, there is poor political will to implement anticorruption laws. Brinkerhoff (2000: 240) noted that successful anticorruption efforts depend upon political will. This includes both the political will to initiate the fight against corruption in the first place, and subsequently the will to sustain the battle over time until results are achieved. A number of factors explain poor political will in Nigeria. First, eradicating corruption in the eyes of politicians and their milito-bureaucratic counterpart is tantamount to committing political suicide. This is because, though fragile, corruption is both a strategy and an instrument not only of political domination but also of political manipulation in Nigeria. And though counterproductive, corruption is also been used as an instrument of political legitimation and re-legitimation. It is indispensable to the relevance and survival of politicians. Corruption is used to acquire political office and as well sustain it. This is seen in the politics of godfatherism and payoffs as earlier discussed. Wherever corruption becomes part and parcel of political strategies for assuming political leadership and where such strategy enjoy, to some extent, public validation (vote buying in Nigeria has become part of the political culture in Nigeria and an average poor man or politicians seem to have accepted this norm in the electoral process), anticorruption laws policies and campaigns are nothing but empty jingles and propaganda and mere political rhetoric. Politics in Nigeria provides the easiest way to wealth and status and politicians do anything to acquire political office including vote buying, contract killing, political assassination and outright bribery of electoral officers and security agents. To some security agents and many electoral officers, election time in Nigeria is a period of boom.

Secondly, economic hardship and crass poverty has rendered attempts to stem the tide of corruption in the country difficult. Corruption is both a symptom and consequence of poverty. Corruption breeds poverty and poverty aid corruption to flourish. Statistics has shown that over sixty percent of Nigerians live below poverty line. Poverty makes people amenable and irresistible to political manipulation and indeed corruption.

Thirdly, tackling corruption is not a one-shot

endeavour, but a challenging long-term undertaking (Brinkerhoff 200:240), requiring high level of commitment and continuity in policies. Anticorruption policies in Nigeria have suffered serious policy discontinuity arising from incessant political and governmental instability. Therefore, the battles against corruption have not been fought on a sustainable basis. More importantly, anticorruption policies in Nigeria are mere political facade designed to buy political support and loyalty from the citizenry.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having interrogated corruption in Nigeria through the prisms of Clientelism, Prebendalism, Patrimonialism, Neopatrimonialism, Soft State thesis and the theory of Two Publics, the paper contends that these theories for a very long time have not only provided credible theoretical frameworks for the understanding of the development tragedy in Africa in general but also of the pandemic and seemingly insoluble problem of political corruption in Nigeria in particular. However, as a point of departure, the paper further argue that rather than fattening the primordial public, the robberies that have taken place at the civic public have never been used to fatten the primordial public, if fattening in this sense is taken to mean social and economic development. Furthermore, it is argued that the problem of political corruption is inextricably linked to the nature and character of the Nigerian state on the one hand and the question of citizenship on the other hand. Therefore, for corruption to be ameliorated there must be constitutional reform that will erase the concept of indigeneity, residence or non-residence or “son of the soil syndrome” from Nigerian politics. Moreover, ethnicity must be demystified in Nigerian politics without which all efforts to eradicate corruption will remain a mirage. There is also the need for strong political will among the political leadership ensuring continuity and doggedness in the fight against corruption in the country. Fundamentally, the cost of corruption should be made to be higher than the gains. Severe punishment must be attached to corruption in the high places. In addition the cost of election must be reduced and the issue of godfatherism in politics must be tackled with dispatch. And because the problem is multifarious, multidimensional and enormous, the solution may seem in-exhaustible.

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