

A MORAL EVALUATION OF PAST MILITARY COUPS AND PRESENT CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Peter. O. O. Ottuh ¹

John A. Onimhawo ²

¹ Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria

² Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria

*Corresponding Email: pottuh@delsu.edu.ng

Citation: Ottuh, P.O.O. & Onimhawo, J.A. (2023). A moral evaluation of past military coups and present corruption in Nigeria. *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 184-200

ABSTRACT

It is altruism that military dictatorship and leadership are synonymous with corruption. It is also obvious that participation of military in national leadership through coups is a practice that is not alien to the biblical era, the world, Africa and Nigeria in particular. Nigeria as a nation like other African countries has had its share of this ugly phenomenon in the past and presently harvesting the fruits thereof. The worst legacy left behind by the military leaderships in Nigeria was corruption. The military ruled Nigeria through coups persistently and its ranks and files have by all indications proved that they too, were not immune against the problem of corruption. Using the instance of coups in the Bible and other underlying moral principles, the paper examines the phenomena of coups and corruption in Nigeria and appraised same from a moral paradigm. The secondary sources of collecting data through scholarly literature on the subject are adopted to attain the objective of the research. The paper also highlights the positive and negative impacts of coups on the Nigerian nation. It argues that corruption is a by-product of past persistent coups in the Nigerian state, and advocates for a constitutional means such as democratic elections to effect a change of power to align with current global democratic trends and avoid corrupt practices. The paper recommends that the current practice of recycling politicians and public office holders who are the same military leaders in the past should be discouraged so that corruption can be minimized in the country.

Keywords: Corruption, Military Coups, Ethical, Moral Evaluation, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

From the Bible to contemporary times, military coups were part of political tradition. It could be reasoned that military coup first took place in heaven when Lucifer, an Archangel and other angels rebelled against God. In the Roman era, some of its emperors, like Julius Caesar and Chandius assumed power through coups. In the Bible,

the same was applicable to King Jehu and others in Israel (2 Kings 9-10; 13-15, 1Kings 12-16). To mention the least, one of such Coups in Israel was that of Absalom, King David's son (2 Samuel 13-20). Coups took place more frequently in developing nations at the end of the twentieth century, particularly in Africa (Luttwak, 1980). The first coup in Africa was in Egypt led by General Neguieh in 1952. In 1963 in Togo Colonel Eyadema led the first coup in West Africa. In Nigeria, the first military coup was in 1966 that brought to power Major-General J. T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi. Since that time, several coups and counter-coups have occurred in Nigeria. Coups in Nigeria have become a staple of Nigeria's national culture and political history. It is worthy of note however, that coups are not only peculiar to African countries, as there have been military coups, successful or attempted in Spain, Greece, Portugal, the defunct Soviet Union, and a host of other Latin American and Asian countries (Malaparte, 2006). Military rules are associated with sectionalism, bureaucracy, ruthlessness, larceny, recklessness and above all, corruption.

The historical account of corruption in the country can never be separated from the advent of the armed forces into its national politics and governance. Hence, to appraise the phenomena of coup and corruption in Nigeria, the paper used biblical and ethical paradigms. At the end of this research, it would be understood that biblically and ethically, violent leadership and corruption are anti-society and inimical to national development. This is because; coups and corruption are like the violent wind that blows no good.

Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption has become a household name in African nations and the world today. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) of the Republic of Sierra Leone noted that corruption is the scourge of this generation (The Anti-Corruption Commission, 2006). When one turns on the radio or television or open the Dailies all one comes across is something that talks about corruption. It further noted, that corruption's insidious effects are more far-reaching and, maybe, even more, devastating than wars, the spread of cancer, or HIV/AIDS and silently it is killing thousands of people every day around the globe. The dictionary defines corruption as unlawful acts or behaviour exhibited by persons in authority (Hornby, 2007). In a more satisfactory definition, Osoba (2000) describes corruption as anti-social behaviour by an individual or social group that confers unjust or fraudulent gains on its perpetrators. For him, corruption is not compatible with shared norms, values and prescribed societal moral principles. According to him, corruption is capable of rendering constituted authorities incapable in providing basic amenities to citizens. The above definition does not only cover the meaning of corruption but also, shows the social and ethical implications of it. Dimant (2016) opined that in Nigeria,

corruption has had its root in coups and prolonged military rule.

For Kunhiyop (2008) corruption is indulging in immoral and unacceptable practices, for example, accepting and giving bribes and kickbacks, illegal collections, fraudulent deals or businesses, all kinds of malpractice, stealing or obtaining favour by tricks and their likes. Corruption, according to Transparency International (TI) is the misuse of official power for one's individual profits (Okafor, Opara & Adebisi, 2020). It said further that corruption cut short people's expectations from their leaders who they surpassingly trusted. Nigeria's Anti-Corruption Law of 2010, defines corruption as receiving and giving gratification (Economic and Financial Crime Commission, 2010; Onyiloha, 2019). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2014) describes corruption as a serious socio-political and economic occurrence. Corruption in the above sense is anti-society and can paralyze development (Dike & Onyekwelu, 2018). Categories of corruption include private, public and institutional corruption.

Historically, the problem of corruption in Nigeria can be traced to the pre-independence and the First Republic. According to Ottuh and Omosor (2022), the politicization of religious conflicts in Nigeria before and after independence has not only resorted to fear but has also bred evil of all kinds, including bad leadership that is immersed in corrupt practices. The corruption during these periods was bedeviled by political imbroglio, but it was well managed and controlled (Temidayo & Okoye, 2020). For example, frontline politicians such as Nnamdi Azikiwe and Adegoke Adelabu were charged for corrupt practices; and in the north, there were reports that implicated the colonial authorities on electoral malpractices (Tignor, 1993). Between August 1966 and July 1975 the period Gowon's administration lasted, serious corruption and its elements were visible. For example, there were reported cases of importation scandals and falsification of transaction manifestos among others (Turner, 1976).

Although the military administration of Murtala Mohammed in 1975 attempted a radical change of the deteriorated situation, it was short-lived. The Olusegun Obasanjo's administration that followed succeeded to some extent in executing several national projects but they turned out to favour and enrich only those who were 'powerful' and the political class. The Shehu Shagari administration (between October 1979 and December 1983) was also considered to be very corrupt (Onis, 1981). This period marked the period of mass public looting of the treasury. Various probes carried out on financial malpractices involving government officials during this period did not see the light of the day. When Muhammadu Buhari came in 1985 some corrupt politicians were convicted of corrupt practices although his government was highly criticized for lapsed ethical judgment. The Ibrahim Babangida's military administration (between 1985 and

August 1993) is believed to have made 'corruption official' in Nigeria (Njoku, 2011). This may be due to the fact that his administration lacked public accountability of any sort. For instance, it is eluded that Babangida persistently used the nation's wealth for his selfish ends.

General Sani Abacha's regime also marked the height of official corruption in the nation. His death revealed the global nature of corruption. General Abubakar Abdusalami who succeeded Abacha primarily focused on returning the country to civil rule but he was faced with so many challenges including corruption which he too partook in like the free 'Holy Communion'. Countless corruption allegations marred the Olusegun Obasanjo's civil rule of May 1999 through May 2007. For instance, the one involving one of his top government officials caught in cahoots with a United States Congressman practically stashing cold hard cash in freezers. Umaru Musa Yaradua's administration was very short. But he was criticized for lack of political will and poor health to steer the national ship. Some reports had highlighted existence of corruption in Yaradua's regime including the alleged unlawful financial transactions between the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and the Presidency that continued unabated.

Under the Goodluck Jonathan's regime (between 2010 and 2015), corruption rate dropped slightly in Nigeria especially during his early years in office, but as time goes on things started to deteriorate again. Jonathan's government faced numerous corrupt scandals including the Aviation Ministry and security contracts scandals. Since his exit from office, several fresh corruption allegations have resurfaced. The second advent of Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 as a civilian president to date has not to help issues in any way. Under the Buhari, administration corruption has been stabilized and accepted as Nigerian societal norm especially among the ruling class (Onukwufor, 2006). Contract figures are inflated unquestioned and the same contracts are awarded to 'themselves' and never executed nor accounted for. There is a big lacuna between the rich and the poor hence, opportunity exist in politics only for the rich and to manipulate election results. Efforts have been made by past and present governments to minimize corruption enacting and enforcing new laws to enhance national integrity systems but all to no avail. The reason for the failure is not farfetched, that is, the cankerworms eating the wood are inside the wood. Causes of corruption in the country is linked to the abundant natural resources, greed, extravagant lifestyle, customs, tribalism and people's unethical behaviours among others.

Military Coups in Nigeria

Etymologically, the word, "*coup*" or "*coup d'état*" has its root in French and it literally means to hit a state. It is an unsolicited attack on a state (Malaparte, 2006). The

word is also used casually to mean a nation gaining upper hand over another nation. An intelligence coup is a good example of this typology. A coup can also be staged against a corporation, for instance, a boardroom coup. Simply put a coup means a sudden overthrow of a sitting-government. By its nature and method, coups are carried out through unconstitutional means (*The free Encyclopedia*, 2016). A coup may be violent or may not. In this sense, a coup can be differentiated from a revolution that radically sacks an existing political structure.

A coup involves taking over control of active portion of the military while neutralizing the remainder of a country's army. The active party captures or expels the leaders, practically takes control of all vital government institutions including communication means, and other physical infrastructure. In a technical sense of it, coups use the power of the sitting government for their own takeover. Huntington (2008) provided three typologies of military coups; they include break-through, veto; and guardian coups. Break-through coups are usually led by non-commissioned officers or junior officers in the military. Examples include the coups in China (1911), Egypt (1952), Greece (1967) and Liberia (1980).

Guardian coups are aimed at improving public peace, efficiency and ending corruption. In this coup, there is no fundamental shift in the structure of power; rather the coupists generally portray their actions as a temporary unfortunate necessary evil. Examples are Pakistan, Turkey, and Thailand coups. Veto coups occur when the army vetoes mass participation and social mobilization. In this sense, the coupists confront and suppress large-scale and broad-based opposition and as a result, they tend to be repressive and bloody. Examples are Chile in 1973 and Argentina in 1976 coups. Senior military officers usually lead veto and Guardian coups. There are several reasons why coups are staged. This includes saving: the country from economic aggression as a result of mismanagement; political and social disorder, and to have a taste of their country's political leadership.

Successful coupists reap the positive reward of their "risky business" by assuming the mantle of governance. While those who fail are charged with treason and afterwards jailed, dismissed or even put to death. Coups may fail because of a combination of reasons. This may include the intelligence services of the targeted government who may detect such coup in its early stage; there may be also a "rebel group" within the coupists; a friendly foreign intelligence service may detect the coup in its infancy and intimate the targeted government; the officers that were not co-opted may resist the coup and counter it; one of the vital units may not reach its intended destination, thus the coup can be aborted; loyal government troop may repel the coupists; and in rear cases, the

general public or the international community may protest the coup, condemn the coupists and refuse to recognize the “new government” thereby forcing the coupists to return to *status quo*. Over the years, many brilliant officers have lost their lives or had their career terminated, or imprisoned for life because of other perceived or actual participation in failed coups.

Since her independence from colonial rule in 1960, Nigeria has experienced over seven military coups, either successful or attempted. The first military coup in Nigeria took place in 1966 which overthrew the government of Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and brought in Major-General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi. A few months later, another military coup was hatched which brought General Yakubu Gowon into power having dissatisfied with the government of General Ironsi. Increasing opposition to continuous delays from Yakubu Gowon in holding free and fair elections led to his overthrow in a bloodless coup in 1975. Led by Brigadier Murtala Muhammed who was assassinated a year later in another bloody military coup in February 1978. General Olusegun Obasanjo who barely escaped death in the hands of the coupists took over the mantle of the country’s leadership afterwards.

By the end of 1983, the government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari was overthrown by another military coup. This regime did not last either. In 1985 another military coup led by Major-General Ibrahim Babangida ousted Major-General Buhari. In 1990, another military coup was attempted by Colonel Gideon Orkar but was suppressed on the same day. Out of frustration and public dissatisfaction, General Babangida resigned and was replaced by Chief Shonekan as the head of the Interim National Government (ING). Few months later, the interim government of Chief Shonekan was overthrown through a “palace” coup by General Sani Abacha. General Abacha died in power and was replaced by General Abdulsalami Abubakar who fulfilled his promises of handing over power to a constitutionally and democratically elected government in 29th May 1999. It is assumed in some quarters that since May 1999 when Nigeria returned to civil rule, the “era of coups” is over.

Impact of Military Coup on Nigeria

Until recently, the Nigerian nation was literally synonymous with incessant military coup *d'état* and repressive regimes. Out of the sixty years of its national existence, Nigeria has been ruled by the military for twenty-nine years. Moreover, the spectre of coups has continued to haunt the Nation even after her transition from military rule to civilian regimes. Most significantly, the frequent coups and eventual military administrations have produced so much negative impact on Nigerian society. Agbese (2003) summarizes these negative impacts as follows:

- I. The allocation of substantial economic resources to the defense section (Ottuh, Ottuh & Aitufe, 2014a).
- II. The development of patterns of civil-military relations characterized by military supremacy over civil institutions.
- III. The worsening of the social, economic and political problems of the nation;
- IV. The military's use of state power as an instrument, which in turn, made political power highly attractive and accordingly, promoted a cycle of coups and counter-coups.
- V. Gross violations of human rights via repressive decrees and practices (Ottuh, 2008).
- VI. The creation of a culture of violence and intolerance (Onimhawo & Ottuh, 2007).
- VII. The proliferation of small arms.

There are also, some areas in which military rules have affected the Nigerian state positively. However, it may be difficult to convince some people that military rule in Nigeria have some positive impact on the nation. For instance, the military in power has been able to initiate actions and policies that set corrupt politicians packing or from participating further in government. The Nigeria military has been able to provide a workable constitution for the civil rule (undoubtedly, the present Nigeria constitution on which the country's democracy stands today is a product of military rule). The military interventions have helped to re-direct the economic life of the country by conforming to the economic realities of the nation. The establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) by General Yakubu Gowon's regime is a clear good example such positive effect of military rule in Nigeria. The operation of the NYSC to date remains a very positive contributory factor to the socio-cultural and socio-economic development of the country. Others positive impact of military rule on Nigeria includes the creation of states and more local government areas which no civil rule has done till date.

Corruption in Nigeria as By-Product of Military Coups and Rule

Long military rules in Nigeria have infected the national life with two types of corruption. This includes materialistic corruption and non-materialistic corruption. While the former consists of undue material benefits, the latter consists of undue services or benefits received. The former may be further categorized into two broad forms: bureaucratic

corruption and political corruption. These two forms of materialistic corruption have robbed this nation not only of its honour but also its very future as a viable state (Nwabuzor, 2003). While bureaucratic corruption is as a result of political corruption, political corruption is the fraudulent and, or forceful acquisition of power over a group of people. In Nigeria for instance, this has been materialized through military coups. Corruption as a stigma develops fast under an imposed ruling class on another. In the history of military rule in Nigeria, no past military regime is free from corruption despite their “intention” to free the nation from corruption.

Based on brute force, military regimes in Nigeria from 1966 to the period of transition to civil government in May 1999 the spirit of prudence and accountability became absent from the national life. The huge financial returns from the Nigerian oil were not accounted for. Even though, for instance, during the Military regime of Murtala/Obasanjo Nigeria was selling over two million barrels of oil per day with annual returns of over twenty U.S. dollars (US \$ 20) billion, yet the country was still engaged in excessive external borrowing (Nwabuzor, 2003). In fact, each military regime plunged Nigeria deeper into corruption. It was reported that under his regime, President Babangida diverted into his secret account from the Central Bank over \$ 12 billion oil revenue (Nwabuzor, 2003; Njoku, 2011). What about the popular Sani Abacha’s hot loots? The military was not only corrupt, but they also made the Nigerian public to be corrupt. Military regimes in Nigeria have been characterized by indiscipline, intolerance, brutality, abuse of human dignity and human fundamental rights. In this sense, Ottuh and Erhabor (2022) provide the trajectories of human rights violations and abuses in African nations, including Nigeria; these human rights abuses and violations are now perpetrated along political and religious lines. Some bold Nigerians who dared to challenge them have their lives terminated, others thrown into jails, while others have to proceed on self-exile.

Several reasons may account for the corruption of the military. This may include the fact that they lack the administrative competence to pilot the affairs of the Nation; there may not be enough resources for them to improve the socio-economic situations they met; their over-ambition and assumption of superiority; and there may be also some difficulties within the military in sharing administrative positions. The Chukwuma Nzeogwu’s led 1966 coup, blamed the coup on persistence corrupt political leadership and political brouhaha. The problem of corruption in Nigeria is also heightened presently by the nation’s political hierarchy (Ugo, 2011). It is obvious that past political leaders were seriously involved in various facet of corruption in the country. The nation’s civil servants are not left out. Civil servants in the past and present have been severally accused of aiding politicians or political office holders in the country to commit all sort

of financial malpractices.

Today most people believe that general opinion in the past accepted and, in one way or the other, blessed the state's use of violence and condemned any revolution against the ruling authorities. Ottuh, Ottuh and Aitufe (2014b) opine that it is a mistake to assume that it is only in contemporary times that Christians have adopted a non-violent method, or have ranged themselves on the side of revolutionary violence. In addition, Ottuh, Ottuh, and Aitufe (2014b) argue that dialogue is the most potent tool to attain peaceful coexistence in the face of conflicts or disagreements. However, the Bible condemns directly and indirectly the use of violence or revolution to achieve goals.

A Moral Evaluation

The Bible is generally accepted as a literal masterpiece of transcendent poetic beauty and a remarkable accomplishment for the men who wrote it. But it is much more than that. The writers themselves testified to the fact that what they wrote originally came from God himself. This is the underlying reason for the Bible's beauty of expression and, more importantly, its knowledge and wisdom. Even Jesus showed that his words "are spirit and life". Quoting understandingly from the Hebrew Scriptures, "All Scripture is inspired of God" Jesus' statement can be aligned with the claims in Paul's epistle (2 Timothy 3:16) (Buttrick, 1992). The application of Bible principles is also to be found through the Scriptures. For instance, in Second Samuel among others, there it is discovered the ideals of community obligation (3:29; 24:11-15) where it is stipulated that good intentions do not alter God's requirements (6:6, 7), and that headship (leadership) in God's theocratic arrangement should be respected (12:28), and that a wise person can avert disaster for many people (2 Samuel 20:21, 22; Eccl. 9:15).

Absalom's coup in Israel (2 Samuel Chapters 13 to 18) is a good place a moral appraisal. Absalom (meaning the "father in peace") (Achtemier, 1985 p.103) was the son of King David (2 Sam. 13), the King of Israel. He was handsome, ambitious and most militant among David's sons. His mother was Maachah, princess of the neighbouring State of Geshur (11 Samuel 3:3; 1 Chro. 3:2). The militia ambition of Absalom started when his half-brother Amnon raped his sister Tamar and King David took no action (11 Sam. 13). Absalom then took the law into his hands and killed Amnon, after which he spent three years in exile in Geshur (2 Sam. 13:34). Through the efforts of Joab, Absalom came back to the King's palace, although the king refused to see him for another two years. This was the beginning of Absalom's plot against the government of his father, David. Absalom was filled with anger and resentment that he harboured the idea of a coup *d'état*. It took Absalom four years to prepare for an uprising that stood a good chance of success. Absalom capitalized on the resistance felt by many people who saw the

steadfast growth of David's kingdom, palace, and administrative structure, but who could not accept the concomitant changes that took place in social orders and values. Firstly, Absalom won the support of the royal counselor, Ahithophel whose authority in the kingdom was indisputable (2 Sam. 15:12).

Firstly, Absalom set up a headquarters in Hebron (2 Sam. 5:5), the else while the capital of David. Thus, at the end of four years Absalom, abetted by the sagacious Ahithophel, planned the coup by distributing his loyalists throughout the land so that they could announce at the appointed time his accession to the Davidic throne. David was able to escape Jerusalem across the Jordan and start the organization of a military come-back (11 Sam. 15; of. 1 Kings 2:7; Ps. 3). Afterwards, David's loyal forces defeated Absalom's militia. However, explicit instructions to spare the life of Absalom by King David were ignored by Joab, and Absalom, who had been entangled in an Oak tree, was stabbed to death (2 Sam. 18). The coup of Absalom was successful but short-lived. Absalom's coup like the military coups in Nigeria was also characterized by excessive abominable corrupt practices after the coup; Absalom occupied Jerusalem (the capital city) without any opposition at the first instance. At the instance of Ahithophel, the relationship between Absalom and his father, David was irreparably breached when Absalom violated publicly the royal harem (2 Sam. 16:20-23). To further his corruption mission, Ahithophel advised Absalom to place at his disposal twelve thousand soldiers with which to attack David and to make the principal objective of the crash the liquidation of the King, so that the nation (Israel) would rally to the support of its new leader (Dada, 2004). Indeed, the few periods the regime of Absalom lasted, Israel was economically, socially, religiously and politically depressed as a result of Absalom's corrupt practices.

While the English dictionary reduces the usage of the term "corruption" to the decomposition of organic matter or to moral depravity, its chief biblical conation is the transience of the present world order with all that belongs to it (Buttrick, 1992). However, the Bible traced the origin of corruption to the devil (Satan) (John 10:10; John 8:44). That is why it is impossible for a corrupt person or nation to desist from it. A corrupt person or nation is under the bondage of Satan. In a bid to fight corruption without the appropriate moral tools will be meant with heavy resistance (Eph. 6:10-18; 10:4). Writing from the perspective of religious socialization, Ottuh and Idjakpo (2022) assert that under a spiritual or moral analysis, corruption is a spiritual sin – it is the devil that sets it up in order to keep men under his control and to rebel against God, frustrate their fellow humans and eventually destroy them.

In Roman 8:21, corruption or "decay" implies the liability of the material universe to change and decay. In 1 Corinthians 15: 42 the term corruption denotes the liability of the

“natural” body to death and dissolution. The Bible is replete with several references to God’s opinions about corruption and corrupt people. In the first instance, God had disassociated himself from persons who are corrupt. God said: “Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: In whose hands. Right hand is full of bribes” (Ps. 26:9 – 10). Prophet Amos in strong terms condemned the corrupt leaders of his days (Amos 5:12-14). Those leaders who enrich themselves through corrupt practices were also condemned by the Psalmist (Ps. 37:16). In his teaching, Apostle Paul said: “Let him that stole, steal no more; ... Let no corrupt communication come from your mouth ...” (Eph. 4:28-31).

The Church as God’s instrument in the secular world obviously has a vital role to play in enhancing a corruption-free society. The pre-information highlighted for Church action in Matthew 11:12, “In the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force” is a clear invitation and encouragement to wage war against corruption. However, a weak, divided and corrupt church cannot fight to eliminate corruption. This is because; such a church lacks the spiritual temerity and ethical stance for such combat. Ethically it is a basic fact that corruption negates societal morality, norms and values. This confirms Ottuh and Aitufe’s (2014) assertion that evil of any kind is anti-society and negates a moral society. It is asserted that corruption hits hardest at the poorest in society, especially those with limited or no possibilities to defend themselves (Dike & Onyekwelu, 2018). From an ethical perspective, corruption destroys crucial social good and values, and trust in society and government (Onyiloha, 2013). This strikes hard on the economic system, discourages productive investments and retards growth of a nation.

Corruption in its ethical sense is capable of destabilizing democratic structures and political institutions of a nation. Such is the case of the Nigerian nation. Corruption over the years has created discrimination between the various groups in society, minorities, religious sects, etc. It has even promoted gender violence. Corruption attacks society as a whole and tends to cripple a vital social order of society. All these results in an unlawful and undue gain for oneself (ego-centrism), be it government, individual or business entities at the expense of the public (societal) good. Thus, the vital services, which the state is obligated to provide to the public without discrimination are mismanaged, this negates a societal communal goal. From an ethical perspective, corruption also undermines basic human rights and the principles of the rule of law (Onyiloha, 2013). In this sense, people should be, as a matter of morality and societal good, accountable for their actions. Ethically, corruption and its impact on society could as well strengthen public understanding of the evil it perpetuates and which could lead to its public rejection.

In every nation, certain acceptable norms exist for the guidance and protection of its citizens. This implies that all human societies are controlled by moral principles; therefore, going against these moral principles amounts to corruption or unethical behaviour, hence, for instance, Ottuh and Idjakpo (2021) provide that ethical behaviour in human society is an imperative and a *sine qua non* of an orderly society. Likewise, every nation of the world has in place certain norms or laws that guide its governance and political system that guarantees its political values and a free political level playground for all, the breach of such laws or norms constitute political corruption. The person holding public offices do so in-trust for the entire citizenry and they are expected to discharge their duties to the state without doing anything that would amount to the infringement of the people's rights. This means that it is morally imperative for all public office holders to abide by the laws and principles guiding the state.

The Nigerian political system as it stands today is not without corruption, there is evidence of moral misconducts among politicians, breach of the constitution and the rule of law, violation of human rights and freedom and deprivation of basic human needs. In collaborating with Ottuh (2012), the situation described above is not different from the current Nigeria's experience of the Sharia regimes that became more evident since 1999. These are a gross violation of what Immanuel Kant called "categorical imperative" (Onukwufor, 2006). Kant's "Categorical Imperative" presupposes a situation whereby a person acts in conformity to the universal principle of morality acceptable all time to every human society without exclusion. For Kant, people should act to reflect a universal moral principle by treating their fellow humans as an end and not as a means. In this sense, political and other public office holders have the moral obligation and imperativeness to conduct them in a manner that reflects proper ethical behaviour which will, in turn, promote the nation's political and economic systems.

According to Ottuh and Idjakpo (2021), Utilitarianism as a theory is two-sided – what is good and what is right. What is right is rooted in consequentialism which emphasizes moral rightness as an alternative in any situation that brings about the highest good as consequence. In this sense, any state institution that involves in corrupt practices including bribery, abuse of power, and violations of citizens' fundamental rights is adjudged as committing morally wrong acts which in the sense of Utilitarian ethics amounts to wrong consequences for the greatest number of people in the nation, this because, a corrupt government institution tends not to be concerned with citizens' general welfare (Ottuh & Erhabor, 2022). In Nigeria today, corruption in all facets of the country has resulted in poverty, unsolicited hardship and drastic reduction of overall utility for the greatest number of citizens.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, the meaning, history and impact of military coup and corruption, the Absalom coup model in the Bible and military coups in Nigeria have been attempted and appraised. It is the finding of this research that military coup breeds corruption and corruption being a product of long military rule in Nigeria has negatively affected and infected the Nigerian nation politically, socially, economically, religiously, morally and culturally among others. It is the position of this paper, that, constitutional means should be adopted as a democratically preferred method of changing a nation's government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper will not be complete without attempting some solutions to the problems highlighted therein. Therefore, predicated on its findings, the research presents the following recommendations:

- i. First, that the Nigerian government should encourage the military and the entire armed forces by providing them with modern equipment and all necessary incentives for them to remain steadfast to their traditional duties of defending the nation against internal and external aggressions.
- ii. Second, ambitious and violent leadership through *coup d'état* should be resisted by Nigerians constitutionally and peacefully, and through dialogue. In other words, the ideal means for change of government should be through democratic and constitutional methods.
- iii. Nigerian leaders of all kinds should learn from history. As the saying goes, "experience is the best teacher". The tragic ends of some African leaders such as Idi Amin of Uganda; Samuel Doe of Liberia; Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire; Eyadema of Togo; Sani Abacha of Nigeria; and Charles Taylor of Liberia should teach Nigerian leaders some lessons. They should not only learn from history, they should also show good examples to their subjects.
- iv. Nigerian leaders and the public should eschew wrong values; if there should be a moral re-orientation in Nigeria, its leaders should stop the inculcation of wrong values into Nigerian children who are the future of tomorrow.

- v. At all levels of government, Nigerian leaders should learn to respect and obey the laws of the land. The idea that some persons are “sacred-cows” should be discouraged.
- vi. To eliminate corruption from the society, the Nigerian government at all levels should intensify efforts to create more employment opportunities for the citizenry, especially the youths. Workers, pensioners and contractors should be paid satisfactorily and as at when due.
- vii. The paper also recommends that the current practice of recycling politicians and public office holders who were the same military leaders in the past should be stopped so that corruption can be minimized in the country.

REFERENCES

- Abdul-Hammed, T.A. (2016). Public Trust, Accountability and Purposeful Governance in Nigeria. *Al-Mirqat*, 1(4), 5–11.
- Achtemier, P.J. (Ed.) (2006). *The Harper Bible Dictionary*. San Francisco: Harper and Row
- Agbese, P.O. (2003). The Day After: Governance and Civil-Military Relations in the Post Military Era. In F.E. Iyoha (Ed.), *Rethinking Governance and Development in the 21st Century*. Ekpoma: Institute of Governance and Development
- Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). (2006). Corruption. org/corruption-biblical-perspective.htm.
- Buttrick, G.A. (Ed.). (1992). *The Interpreters' Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. New York: Abingdon Press
- Dada, A.O. (2004). Prosperity Gospel in Nigerian Context: A Medium of Social Transformation or an Impetus for Delusion? *Orita: Ibadan Journal of religious Studies*, xxxvi(1-2), 98-99.
- Dike, E.E. & Onyekwelu, R.U. (2018). Corruption and democratic governance in Nigeria: The Nexus. *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration*, 6(2), 26-35. <https://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Corruption-and-Democratic-Governance-in-Nigeria-The-Nexus.pdf>

- Dimant, E. (2016). The nature of corruption: An interdisciplinary perspective, Economics Discussion. Papers, No. 2013-59, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, Germany
- Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). (2010). *Anti-corruption Laws*. Abuja: Government Press.
- Folarin, S.F. (2014). *Corruption Politic and Governance in Nigeria*. Abeokuta: Covenant University
- Hornby, A.S. (2007). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Huntington, S.P. (2008). *The Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University.
- Kunhiyop, S.W. (2008). *African Christian Ethics*. Nairobi, Kenya: Hippo Books.
- Luttwak, E. (1980). *Coup d'etat: A Practical Handbook*. Cocmoridge, Mass: Harvard University Press
- Malaparte, C. (2006). *Technique du Coup d'etat*. Paris: n.p.
- Njoku, F.O. (2011). Corruption: The Bane of Nigeria's Development. In E. C. Anowai (Ed.), *Pope John Paul II annual memorial lecture series* (pp. 5-44). Awka: Demercury Bright
- Nwabuzor, E.J.O. (2003). Corruption and democracy: The Nigerian case. In F.E. Iyoha (Ed.), *Re-thinking Governance and Development in the 21 Century*. Ekpoma: Institute of Governance and Development
- Okafor, O., Adebisi, F., Opara, M. & Okafor, C. (2020). Deployment of Whistleblowing as an Accountability Mechanism to Curb Corruption and Fraud in a Developing Democracy. *Accounting Auditing and Accountability Journal*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341149495_Deployment_of_Whistleblowing_as_an_Accountability_Mechanism_to_Curb_Corruption_and_Fraud_in_a_Developing_Democracy
- Onis, J. de. (1981). Rice Shortage in Nigeria Brings Charges of Corruption. *The New York Times*, January 18, 32.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corruption_in_Nigeria#cite_note-31

- Onukwufor, M.E. (2006). Political corruption and poverty in Nigerian democratic state: any grounds for justification? Unpublished Master's Thesis presented to the Centre for Applied Ethics Linköpings Universitet.
- Onyiloha, C.A. (2013). An Ethical Analysis and Application of Benedict XVI's Caritas in Veritate to Business Practice in Nigerian Society. *Areopagus: Journal of Church & State Relations*, 3(3), 1-18.
- Osoba, S.O. (2000). Corruption in Nigeria: Historical Perspective. In R. Mukandala (Ed.), *African Public Administration: A Reader* (pp. 451-471). Harare: AAPS Books
- Onimhawo, J.A. & Ottuh, P.O.O. (2007). Religious extremism: A challenge to national unity and development. *The Nigeria Journal of Christian Studies*, 3(2), 54-66.
- Ottuh, P. & Erhabor, F. (2022). Radical Islamism: Trajectories of human rights violations and abuses in Africa. *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, 8(1), 243-264.
- Ottuh, P.O. & Idjakpo, O.G. (2021). Imperativeness of Ethics in Christianity: Perspectives and Praxis. *KIU Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(1), 129-135.
- Ottuh, P.O. & Idjakpo, O.G. (2022). Migration and religious socialization in Nigeria: the Fulanization dilemma. *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, 8(3), 418-428.
- Ottuh, P.O. & Omosor, F.O. (2022). Examination of Religiophobia and Politicization of Religious Conflicts in Postcolonial Nigeria. *Cogito*, 14(4), 37-54.
- Ottuh, P.O., Ottuh, J.A., & Aitufe, V. O. (2014a). Distributive justice and inclusive society: Role of religion in the equitable distribution of wealth. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(23), 196-213.
- Ottuh, P.O., Ottuh, J.A., & Aitufe, V.O. (2014b). Christian–Muslim relations in Nigeria: The problems and prospects. *AFRREV IAH: An International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 3(2), 46-62.
- Ottuh, P.O.O. & Aitufe, V.O. (2014). Kidnapping and moral society: An ethico-religious evaluation of the Nigerian experience. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(14), 420-434.
- Ottuh, P.O.O. (2008). Human rights abuses and violations in Nigeria: The Sharia

experience. *Iroro: A Journal of Arts*, 13(1&2), 63-71.

Ottuh, P.O.O. (2012). Sharia, Secularism and Secularization: An Appraisal of the Nigerian Experience. *SAU Journal of Humanities*, 1(1), 216-228.

Temidayo, O.F. & Okoye, V.J. (2020). Psychology of Politics and Politicians in Nigeria: The Human and Social Governance Consequences. *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research*, 8(1), 1-13

The free Encyclopedia. (2006). Coup d'etat.
<http://en.Wikipedia.Org/wiki/Military-Coup>.

Tignor, R.L. (1993). Political Corruption in Nigeria before Independence. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 31(2), 23-41.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00011897>

Turner, H. (1976). The Nigerian Cement Racket. *Africa Guide*, 6.

Ugo, U. (2011). Corruption in Nigeria: Roots, Branches and Fruits. In E.C. Anowai (Ed.), *Pope John Paul II Annual Memorial Lecture Series* (pp. 227-241). Awka: Demercury Bright

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2014). Action against Corruption and Economic Crime.
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption/index.html?ref=menuside>