How Double Standard Nurtures Widespread Corruption that Entrenched Poverty in Africa

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DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.70922

Received: 18 August 2023; Accepted: 31 August 2023; Published: 27 September 2023

ABSTRACT

Using secondary sources of data or information such as articles, reports, research papers, and working papers obtained from the internet, this study conceptually explicates how double standard nurtures widespread corruption that entrenched abject poverty in Africa. The paper argues that while the West including its media has been conspicuous for taking punitive actions (sanctions, freezing accounts) on corrupt African leaders, it has also been conspicuously silent on the role played by Western financial institutions and corporations that facilitate the transfer and laundering of stolen funds from Africa. Thepaper also argues that the tens of billions of dollars that leave the shores of Africa could have been used to address or tackle poverty in Africa. As such, the paper opined that the failure of the West to institute penal action against Western financial institutions and corporations that facilitate the transfer and laundering of stolen funds from Africa validates hypocrisy and the double standards of its stance of fight corruption in Africa. Therefore, the paper concludes that Africa reliance on the West to help fight against widespread corruption responsible for abject poverty is not only an illusion but must be viewed with serious skepticism.

Keywords: Africa, Corruption, Double Standards, Illicit capital flight, Poverty, The West, Western Media

INTRODUCTION

Passionate to help alleviate the millions of people afflicted with extreme or abject poverty in Africa attributed to widespread corruption, the West has been very instrumental in taking rigid actions such as sanctions and freezing the assets of African leaders allegedly involved in corruption. In addition, Western media through sustained coverage are conspicuous for giving Africans walloping in extreme poverty the impression that makes them blame their leaders for creating poverty. Of course, this empirical fact for blaming African leaders for corruption that entrenched poverty remains undisputed. For example, research reveals the trends of the amount of money stolen from Africa in illicit capital flight. According to the UN and the AU, around $148 billion is stolen from the continent annually by political leaders, multinational corporations, the business elite, and civil servants with the complicity of banking and property industries in Europe and North America (Adusei, 2009). In 2021, New African published that every year, an estimated $88.6bn leaves Africa in illicit capital flight (New African, 2021). Similarly, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development report indicates that Africa loses about US$89 billion a year as a result of illicit financial flows and theft which represents 3.7% of its GDP (Kedzierska, 2020). The variance in these figures cannot possibly deny the reality of illicit capital flight from Africa.

On the flip side of the same coin, the revelations clearly suggest that this form of corruption involves a giver and recipient in which both parties must be treated equally before the law and likewise the media. On the contrary, Africa continues to witness a semblance of travesty of justice in the fight against corruption. This is evidenced by the fact that it is always the giver that is penalized through sanction. This one-sided action bags an answer for the question pertaining to the action against the recipient that is yet to attract the attention of Western media coverage. Shouldn’t the recipient answer to the charge of criminal facilitation for corruption that entrenched extreme poverty in Africa? The answer to this salient question provides the discussion surrounding the caption of this paper. In other words, this one-sided approach of sanctioning

African leaders explains the concept of double standard this paper seeks to explore relative to nurturing entrenched poverty in Africa.

In addressing the topic, this article takes a four-sided segment focusing on different thematic issues. The first segment treats double standard as the paper's conceptual underpinning and clarifies the concept of "The West". The second segment conceptualizes corruption as it relates to illicit capital flight. Particularly, it catalogs a few cases of stolen monies from Africa deposited in Western bank accounts as the safe haven, and properties purchased in the West.

It also provides a brief nexus between corruption and entrenched poverty in Africa.

Viewed as the crux of the paper, the third segment provides a logical argument for how the concept of double standard nurtures corruption that entrenched extreme poverty in Africa. It catalogs some pieces of evidence of double standards from the West in the fight against corruption in Africa. Finally, the fourth segment draws the conclusion of the paper.

METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS

The reliance on published texts such as articles, reports, research papers, and working papers found on the internet to explore the topic implies that the study adopted a content analysis approach. Considered one of the types of qualitative methods, content analysis helps the researcher to analyze relevant literature and come up with inferences pertaining to the topic under interrogation. The materials (articles, reports, opinion papers, etc.) which are equated to the qualitative data were sourced from the internet through the Google Scholar Search Engine and Bielefeld Academic Search Engine.

Contribution to Knowledge

The sole intent of this paper is to contribute to existing knowledge through the following ways: The paper may serve as the source of academic literature. Precisely it exposes the reason for widespread corruption responsible for the entrenchment of abject poverty in Africa. Finally, the paper may serve as guidance for further research to be carried out on the subject matter in areas that the paper did not address.

Conceptual Underpinning

In research, conceptual underpinning serves as the foundation or basis on which the crux of the arguments is built. Therefore, this paper adopts double standard as its conceptual underpinning.

A review of various literature revealed that the concept of double standard carries a similar connotation. For example, dictionary.com defines the concept as the application of different sets of principles for situations that are, in principle, the same. The website collinsdictionary.com. HarperCollins Publishers describes the concept as the treatment whereby one group is given more latitude than another. As for the Cambridge English Dictionary, a double standard arises when two or more people, groups, organizations, circumstances, or events are treated differently even though they should be treated in the same manner. In the words of Eichler (1980), a double standard "implies that two things which are the same are measured by different standards". Similarly, Itamar Shatz avers that a double standard occurs when two or more things, such as individuals or groups, are treated differently when they should be treated the same way.

A careful analysis of the above like-minded definitions reveals the followings: first, when used in the context of penal sanction, or legality, it is tantamount to selective justice that also implies a travesty of justice. When used in the context of groups or organizations, it connotes another concept referred to as preferential treatment which is difficult to justify or defend.

Regardless of the context in which the concept is applied or used, it can be argued that a double standard arises due to the protection of vested interests. In other words, people who engage in double standards through preferential treatment do so to protect either their own vested interests or the vested interests of others connected to the events, scenario, or situation. For example, in George Orwell's 1945 novel "Animal Farm" the main reason behind the pigs amendment of all the rules that the animals initially agreed on, in place of a single rule, "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" was to protect their vested corrupt interests at the expense of the other animals. Literally, this amendment influenced by the pigs encouraged the repeat of the same corruption inflicted on them by the irresponsible and alcoholic farmer, Mr. Jones chased out of the farm.

On the premise that a double standard is driven by vested interests, it is easy to make the inference that the concept is intentional and conscious. Those who consciously engage in double standards are inclined to the wrongfulness but careless about how their actions will be interpreted by others. A classic example to support this assertion could be seen in the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in which nationals from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East were not getting the same generous treatment as the citizens of Ukraine across Europe (Reilly & Flynn, 2022).

The media has also come under the spotlight for applying double standards. A fresh example stems from former US President Obama criticizing the excessive media coverage afforded to the submarine incident compared to the tragic sinking of the fishing boat carrying about 700 migrants who attempted to reach Greece (Upadhayay, 2023).

The West

For the purpose of this article, the West refers to Europe and North America, especially the US, Switzerland, Britain, France, New Zealand, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Austria, and many others.

Western Media

As used in this article, Western media include The New York Times, the Washington Post, CNN, BBC, ABC, CBS, ITV, Fox, Sky News, and other media.

The reason for conceptualizing the West and Western media in this way stems from their strategic positions in this article discuss subsequently.

Corruption -Illicit Capital Flight/ Illicit financial flows

This segment of the paper unpacks historic cases of corruption with the main emphasis on illicit capital flight from Africa to the West. To be precise, it catalogs cases of stolen monies from Africa deposited in Western bank accounts. According to former Nigeria President Olusegun Obasanjo corrupt African leaders have stolen at least $140bn (£95bn) from their people in the decades since independence (Peta, 2002). For the purpose of providing evidence to support how widespread corruption through capital flight or illicit financial flows entrenched poverty in Africa, below is the catalog of a few countries of illicit capital. These rich countries are endowed with natural resources, the entrenchment of abject poverty explains the paradox in which the majority of their population lives on less than $2 per day.

Sani Abacha of Nigeria (1993-1998)

According to the corruption watchdog Transparency International, Abacha stole as much as $5 billion of public money during his five years running in Nigeria (Reuters, 2015).

Following his death in 1998, investigators in Nigeria, Europe, and North America found over 130 foreign bank accounts where some of the money stolen was kept.

The banks that received Abacha's stolen funds are: Australia and New Zealand Banking Group (ANZ), Frankfurt branch; ANZ, London; ANZ, New York; Bank Len, Zurich; Bankers Trust Company, Frankfurt;

Bankers Trust Company, London; Bankers Trust Company, New York; Banque Baring Brothers, Geneva; Banque Edouard Constant, General; Banque Nationale de Paris, Basel; Banque Nationale de Paris, Geneva; Banque Nationale de Paris, London; Barclays Bank, London; Barclays Bank, New York; Citibank NA, London; Citibank NA, Luxembourg; Citibank NA, New York; Citibank, Zurich; Credit Lyonnais, New York; Credit Suisse, General; Credit Suisse, New York; Credit Suisse, Zurich; Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, Jersey; First Bank (Schweiz) AG, Zurich; First Bank of Boston, London; Goldman Sachs and Company, Zurich; Gothard Bank, Geneva; LGT Liechtenstein Bank, Vaduz; Liechtenstein Landes bank, Vaduz; MM Warburg and Company, Hamburg; MM Warburg and Company, Luxembourg; MM Warburg and Company, Zurich; Merrill Lynch Bank, Geneva; Merrill Lynch Bank, New York; Midland Bank, London; National West minister Bank, London; Paribas, Geneva; Paribus, London; Royal Bank of Scotland, Leeds; Standard Bank London Limited, London; UBS AG, Geneva; UBS AG, Zurich; Union Bancaire Privee, Geneva;Union Bancaire Privee, London; and Verwaltungs Und Private Bank AG, Vaduz (Tell Magazine, 2002), as cited by Adusei (2009).

Omar Bongo (1967-2009)

In February 2009, a French court had the then Gabonese President Omar Bongo’s nine bank accounts containing more than four million euros frozen. In confirming the court’s decision, lawyer Jean-Philippe Le Bail said, ‘This concerns Credit Lyonnais, in which the president of Gabon has two current accounts, two savings accounts and a share account, and BNP, in which he has two checking accounts, a savings account, and a share account.’ Before his death in June 2009, Bongo together with his family had 70 bank accounts in France the money from which was used to purchase several properties worth millions of dollars. His wife Edith had over $75 million stashed in banks in Monaco (France24, 2009).

According to the police report, the Bongo family owns 39 properties in France, mostly in exclusive districts of Paris and on the Riviera. They also have nine luxury cars worth a total of 1.5 million euros. Police noted that the way some of the vehicles were paid for was “unusual, to say the least.” For example, Omar Bongo’s late wife Edith bought a Maybach 57 worth 326,752 euros with a cheque from an account held by the Gabon treasury at the Bank of France

Through a French lawyer, Bongo denied that his and his family’s assets were acquired with embezzled public funds (Reuters, 2009)

Denis Sassou Nguesso (1979-2023)

The longest-serving President of Congo-Brazzaville. According to French police investigations, Congo-Brazzaville President Denis Sassou Nguesso and his close relatives own 24 properties and 112 bank accounts in France (Reuters, 2009).

A police investigation uncovered that Sassou-Nguesso’s daughter Edith, who was Bongo’s late wife, and other members of the ruling family of Congo, bought a mansion in the rich 8th district of Paris for 18.9 million euros — the single biggest transaction mentioned in the police file.

In an interview in March with the French newspaper Le Figaro, Sassou-Nguesso said his French property portfolio was modest and he was not responsible for what his children and relatives did. He said he had acquired Villa Suzette, a mansion in the rich Paris suburb of Le Vesinet, to house his children while they were studying in France (Reuters, 2009).

Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo

The current President of Equatorial Guinea who seized power from his dictatorial uncle in a palace coup in 1979 and has ruled ever since is also on the hook of illicit capital flight. Just recently, a Global Witness investigation accused the Dupont Circle branch of Riggs Bank in Washington DC of harboring Equatorial Guinea's Oil millions in Secret accounts (Global Witness, 2023). According to Global Witness, a massive US$300-500 million of Equatorial Guinea's(2) oil revenues may have been placed in a Riggs Bank under the control of President-for-life Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. Documents in Global Witness' possession reveal a close working relationship between the President, his family, and the Dupont Circle branch of Riggs Bank. It is unclear if depositing these funds directly in Washington is technically illegal under Equatorial Guinea's oil laws, Global Witness calls upon the US Department of Justice to investigate the nature of this bank account (Global Witness, 2023). Despite the call, the US Department of Justice seems to be silent.

In another development, French police identified eight luxury cars and one apartment in a wealthy part of Paris owned by Obiang's son Teodorin, also minister for agriculture and forestry. The cars, worth a total of 4.2 million euros, are two Ferraris, one Maybach, two Bugattis, one Rolls-Royce Phantom, and two Maseratis (Reuters, 2009).

In July 2021, London also froze his financial assets in the U.K. and banned him from its territory following anti-corruption investigations. Moreover, Teodorin Obiang himself was definitively sentenced by the French justice at the end of July 2021 to three years in prison with a suspended sentence and 30 million euros in fines and the confiscation of his assets in France for having fraudulently built up a luxurious patrimony within the framework of the "ill-gotten gains" cases (Africa news, 2019).

Daniel Arap Moi (1972-2002)

The case of the former Kenyan leader is also alarming. According to the Kroll investigation commissioned by President Mwai Kibaki shortly after he came to power on an anti-corruption platform in 2003, former Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi and his family have banked 1 billion in 28 countries including Britain (The Guardian, 2007). The report further revealed that the assets accumulated included multimillion pound properties in London, New York, and South Africa, as well as a 10,000-hectare ranch in Australia and bank accounts containing hundreds of millions of pounds (The Guardian, 2007). In conclusion, the report disclosed Moi and his relatives siphoned off more than £1bn of government money. If true, it would put the Mois on a par with Africa's other great kleptocrats, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) and Nigeria's Sani Abacha (The Guardian, 2007).

Mobutu Sese Seko (1965-1997)

In 1997, the Government of Congo through its investigation identified $8 billion Mobutu had siphoned from his country and deposited in Switzerland during his 32 years in power (The New York Times, 1997). After its investigation, Switzerland's commercial banks indicated they have found only $3.4 million belonging to the ousted President of Congo. The Swiss officials argued that they cannot do more to locate Mobutu assets without detailed evidence including bank names, account numbers, and information about wrongdoing. Moreover, they maintained that "there are many ways in which Mobutu could have deposited the money"(New York Times, 1997). In another development, the Swiss Government ordered a freeze on Mobutu's US$2.5 million Swiss villa, but not on other assets of the embattled ruler stashed away in Switzerland, estimated by the Swiss media to total $4 billion (Transparency International, 1997)

Yahya Jammeh (1994-2017)

Following his exile due to the loss of the election, a court in the US ruled that the $3m (£2.4m) mansion in the state of Maryland, near Washington DC, should be seized from a trust set up by ex-Gambian leader Yahya Jammeh (Zane, 2022).

In a related development, the Government has ordered the freezing of Yahya Jammeh's assets he obtained from the unlawful withdrawal of over $50 million from two state accounts between 2006 and 2017(Akwei, 2017).

Jose Eduardo dos Santos (1979-2017)

once one of Africa's longest-serving rulers who during almost four decades was the President of Angola. According to a New York-based Human Rights Watch 2004 report based on an analysis of the International Monetary Fund figures, more than $4 billion in oil revenue vanished from Angolan state coffers during his presidency between 1997 and 2002. Dos Santos was believed to own valuable real estate in Brazil, France, and Portugal, as well as foreign bank accounts. The U.S. State Department bluntly indicated that the wealth in Angola is "concentrated in the hands of a small elite, who often used government positions for massive personal enrichment" dating far back to Dos Santos regime (The Associated Press, 2022)

Isabel dos Santos

Africa's richest woman and daughter of Angola's former president Jose Eduardo dos Santos who ruled the oil-rich Angola for almost 40 years until he stood down in 2017 bank account was ordered frozen by a court in Lisbon following a request by Angolan authorities. International media outlets published an inquiry dubbed "Luanda Leaks" on January 19, claiming that dos Santos fraudulently accumulated a fortune estimated at $2.1 billion (1.9 billion euros) (Aljazeera, 2020). Without prejudice to the fact, it can beinferred that Isabel's unexplained wealth was acquired during her father's regime accused of siphoningmore than $ 4 billion (The Associated Press, 2022).

James Ibori

In 2012, London's Southwark Crown Court ordered James Ibori, a former Nigerian politician, and his criminal associates to repay £130 million ($167 million) that he looted while serving as governor of Delta State from 1999 to 2007 (Aljazeera, 2021).

James Ibori, the flamboyant governor of the oil-rich state in southern Nigeria between 1999 and 2007, was jailed in Britain in 2012 for money laundering and fraud following a Metropolitan Police operation (Aljazeera, 2021).

Ibori, a one-time cashier at a chain of British DIY stores, used public funds to buy luxury homes, top-of-the-range cars, and a private jet. Investigators focused on the fraudulent sale and purchase of shares in Ibori's mobile phone company to Nigeria's Delta State and Akwa Ibom State (Aljazeera, 2021).

The court argued that Ibori had amassed a criminal fortune of almost £116 million, and the judge at a confiscation hearing in London's Southwark Crown Court on Monday ordered him to repay£101,514,315.21 (Aljazeera, 2021).

Analysis of The Cases

In a fair analysis, all the cases of capital flight mentioned above inarguably explain how corruption in Africa has been facilitated by banking institutions in Europe and North America, especially the US, Switzerland, Britain, France, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Austria, and many others, which accept money from African leaders without questioning the source of the money.

The analysis of all the cases mentioned above also reveals another dimension of capital flight through the property sector, particularly real estate and vehicle companies in Europe, North America, and Australia has also been the beneficiary as Africa's political and business elite spend their ill-gotten gains. Examples are inarguably copious, just to mention a few. The $3m (£2.4m) mansion in the state of Maryland, near Washington DC bought by The Gambia former president Yahya Jammeh (Akwei, 2017). A French magistrate's 2008 investigation discovered that Omar Bongo who ruled Gabon for forty-one years until his death in 2009 and his family owned at least 33 luxury properties in France worth a total of $190 million.

These numbers are almost certainly just the tip of the financial iceberg. In Paris alone. Moreover, Bongo owned 10 luxury mansions including a 21,528 sq ft villa located at Rue de la Baume near the Elyse Palace, bought in 2007 for _18.8 million. Bongo was spotted greeting then French President Nicolas Sarkozy in this villa. Another four of the 10 houses are on the exclusive Avenue Foch near the Arc de Triomphe (Moss, 2015). The investigation also uncovered that Bongo bought a fleet of limousines, including a 308,823 Maybach for his wife Edith in February 2004. Payment for some of the cars was directly taken from the treasury of Gabon. Bongo's daughter Pascaline used a cheque from the same account for a part-payment of 29,497 towards a 60,000 Mercedes two years later. Bongo himself bought a Ferrari 612 Scaglietti F1 in October 2004 for 153,000. It was also unearthed that Inge Bongo, Omar Bongo's daughter-in-law, visited Beverly Hills in Hollywood, United States, to purchase a US$ 25 million (Shs 49.6bn) property in Malibu's exclusive Broad Beach area. Her intentions left observers wondering whether a part of the Gabonese government's annual budget would go towards paying for a new mansion for Bongo's daughter-in-law (Kiapi, 2008)

Another example reflects the current President of Gabon Ali Bongo, Omar Bongo's son, who purchased a luxury housing estate costing _100 million. The building, which covers a space of 4,500 square metres witha garden covering 3,700 square metres, is located on Paris' University Street and has been described as 'one of the most beautiful' in the heart of the city. French satirical newspaper Le Canard enchain reported that'the _100 million does not include other expenditure to be made for the renovation and maintenance work which could take a third of Gabon's GDP'. In June 2001, Ali Bongo bought a Ferrari 456 M GT for 156,000. French police investigations indicate that this lifestyle of profligacy was supported by leading French banks, housing developers, and vehicle dealers (Kate Symons, 2015).

The Kroll investigation exposed how Kenya's Moi and his family bought several multi-million-pound properties in London, New York, and South Africa and a 10,000-hectare ranch in Australia. While the majority of Kenyans live in slums and in rural areas, with little roofing over their heads and lacking water and other basic necessities of life, Moi's family lives in a 4 million home in Surrey and a 2 million flat in Knightsbridge in Britain (The Guardian, 2007).

In 2018, Transparency International UK listed two London houses suspected to be owned by Nigeria's Senate President, Bukola Saraki for investigation under Britain's new law, Unexplained Wealth (Agency Report, 2018).

According to TI, Land Registry documents show that the houses at 7 and 8 Whittaker Street, Belgravia, London are owned by Land field International Developments Limited and Renocon Property Development Limited worth a combined total of around £15 million (Agency Report, 2018). The Speaker did the registration in his wife's name to hide the true ownership of the property. He also bought a property at St George Wharf in London for 450,000 (Agency, Report, 2018). Providing details of the lawmaker's salary and emoluments to the agency, former President Muhammadu Buhari wrote the United Kingdom Serious Fraud Office (SFO) to ascertain how the Speaker acquired the pricey landed property in London (The Cable, 2018).

The Nexus between Corruption and Entrenched Poverty

Premise on the concept of a causal relationship or cause and effect that explains how one social phenomenon triggers the occurrence of another social phenomenon, this sub-caption explicates how corruption entrenches poverty in Africa. The literature review reveals how corruption perpetuates and entrenches poverty. In the IMF Working Papers Volume 1998, Issue 076, Gupta's (1998) findings empirically revealed that high and rising corruption increases income inequality and poverty by reducing economic growth, the progressivity of the tax system, the level and effectiveness of social spending, and the formation of human capital. On the flip side of the same coin, Gupta argued that higher growth is found to increase the rate of poverty alleviation. He further cited the national budget as the principal vehicle through which any government conducts its core functions which include poverty reduction. Granted the time interval of the publication of Gupta working paper as of now is above 10 years. However, the paper still resonates with contemporary society. For example, it is through the national budget government allocates money to build hospitals and equip them with drugs and other medical accessories. Build schools, Universities, roads, etc. The diversion of these monies into private pockets or accounts disadvantages the population. This is why Hilary Benn, Former UK Secretary of State for International Development intimated when he said: “In poor countries, [corruption] can kill. Money meant for drugs for a sick child, or to build a hospital, can be siphoned off into overseas bank accounts or to build a luxury house” (Control BAE, n.d.)

In the opinion of the World Bank, Corruption reduces a government’s tax revenue by as much as half, thereby reducing income available for reducing poverty (Control BAE, n.d.). Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development opines that bribery and corruption impede the efforts to reduce poverty. In particular, the diversion of funds through corrupt practices undermines attempts by citizens to achieve higher levels of economic, social, and environmental welfare (Control BAE, n.d.).

Without being prejudicial, it is difficult to aloof the above facts from Africa. Inarguably, corruption has been identified as one of the main drivers of extreme poverty in Africa. In the classic paper, Aikins & McLachlan (2022) cataloged several factors undermining the fight against extreme poverty in which corruption is among the top. For any reason to question these realities, ponder about how the billions and millions of dollars stolen from Africa by their leaders could possibly address poverty

How The Concept of Double Standard Fits In

With close reference to the assertion from Former Nigeria President Olusegun Obasanjo “A man who provides a safe haven for stolen things is equally guilty as the one who stole the things,” (Peta, 2002) as the premise for the argument in support of this sub-caption viewed as part of the crux of the paper, this is how the concept double standard fits in.

Firstly, Western financial institutions (banks). In his eloquent article, Lord Aikins Adusei intimated the role played by Western financial institutions and corporations in facilitating the transfer and laundering of looted or stolen monies from Africa (Adusei, 2016). The selected cases of capital flight of looted funds mentioned in this paper support Lord Aikins Adusei’s claims that the tens of billions of dollars that leave the shores of Africa annually are not the making of Africa alone. Britain, France, Switzerland, the United States, and other developed economies are not only deeply involved but provide the avenue, incentives, and the legal and institutional infrastructures in promoting corruption in Africa. The cities of London, Paris, New York, Washington, Geneva, Zurich, and Monaco serve as home to the billions of dollars that leave Africa each year (Adusei, 2016).
Based on bilateral arrangements and the West, Courts in these countries serving as the safe haven for the billions of dollars often freeze and if necessary, inflict penal sanctions only on the culprits but not the banks that ignore due diligence pertaining to the source of the money. The case of the former Governor of Delta State, James Ibori jailed in Britain in 2012 for money laundering and fraud following a Metropolitan Police operation (Aljazeera, 2021) validates the argument of double standards. It bags answer for the question pertaining to what happens to the institutions and persons that facilitated the crime. Similarly, Isabel dos Santos’s bank account in Portugal was frozen by a court in Lisbon following a request by Angolan authorities (The Associated Press, 2022). What happens to the bank that facilitated the transaction without regard to due diligence to ascertain the source of the money?

Another classic case in point can be seen from French police investigations indicating that the lifestyle of the profligacy of Ali Bongo was supported by leading French banks, housing developers, and vehicle dealers (Kate Symons, 2015).

Look at the case of how the Swiss bank that save Sani Abacha looted money and also financed violence in

Zimbabwe's 2008 Election that reinforced Mugabe's regime. Details from the Suisse Secrets leak have shed new light on Credit Suisse's role in a controversial platinum mine sale that helped finance a wave of violence around Zimbabwe's 2008 election (Sahara Reporters, New York, 2022).

Regarding the $214 million deposits from two sons of the late Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha, the Swiss Federal Banking Commission found Credit Suisse, one of the world's biggest private banks guilty of ignoring anti-money laundering rules. Interestingly, after two years, the Swiss Banking Association fined Credit Suisse 750,000 Swiss francs ($505,100) over its handling of Abacha family funds but the bank faced no criminal charges (Sahara Reporters, New York, 2022).

In these examples or cases equated to the pieces of evidence, it makes to mistake to point to the best practice regarding financial institutions (Banks) regulations. Mindful of the fact that bank regulation varies from country to country, but all countries have some form of regulation in place to prevent financial crimes such as illicit capital flight, money laundering, illicit financial flow, etc.

In the case of the French police investigations indicated that the lifestyle the profligacy of Ali Bongo was supported by leading French banks, housing developers, and vehicle dealers (Kate Symons, 2015). Again, did the French Government initiate any criminal or court action against the banks, housing developers, and vehicles? Why did they go off the hook?

What about the outcome of former President Muhammadu Buhari official request to the United Kingdom Serious Fraud Office to ascertain how the Speaker of Nigeria Parliament acquired the pricey landed property in London (The Cable, 2018)? Up to the publication of this paper, this paper search for feedback has proven futile.

Inarguably, the deliberate ignoring of this best practice (preventing financial crimes) as mentioned above especially in the case of Credit Suisse handling of the Abacha family's $214 million deposits is tantamount to the concept of double standards.

Another possible scenario of double standard is the property sector (particularly real estate and vehicles) in Europe, North America and Australia has also been the beneficiary of Africa's political and business elite ill-gotten wealth. Investigations unearthed that several African leaders and public officials have bought luxury mansions and expensive cars in Europe and North America using the monies stolen from their poor countries. As mentioned in this article, the cases of the late Mobutu Sese Seko of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Omar Bongo and his family, Daniel Arab Moi and his family, Yahya Jammeh, James, Ibori, Bukola Saraki Nigeria's Senate President, etc. that bought several multi-million-pound, millions of dollars, billions of dollars properties in Europe, North America, and Australia with looted monies explain a clear semblance of double standards. This is simply because the investigation is yet to explain to the affected people of Africa what happens to the real estate companies and vehicle companies or dealers for accepting stolen monies.

Finally, this article finds it difficult to close this sub-caption without mentioning of how Western corporations fit in the concept of double standards by the West. Research copiously documents the impunity enjoyed by Western companies paying bribes and kickbacks to induce officials to award them lucrative contracts. For example, in September 2002, Canadian firm Acres International was convicted by a High Court in Lesotho for paying a $260,000 bribe to secure an $8 billion dam contract (International Rivers, 2007), Pallister, 2002).

In the same 2002, Halliburton, a company once controlled by former US Vice-President Dick Cheney, was accused of establishing a $180 million slush fund with the intent of using it to bribe Nigerian officials in order to secure a $10 billion liquefied gas plant contract in Nigeria (Gambrell, 2010, Tattersall, 2010)

Achair Partners, a Swiss company, and Italian firm Progresso have been accused of bribing Somalia Transition Government officials in order to secure contracts to deposit highly toxic industrial waste in the waters of Somalia (Adusei, 2015).

In October 2002, after a three-year investigation, a UN panel of experts implicated Cabot Corporation (Boston, US), Eagle Wings Resources International, and OM Group (Ohio, US) in arming rebel groups and collaborating with them to traffic from the Democratic Republic of Congo gold, diamonds, timber and, most importantly, coltan (columbo-tantalite), a precious ore essential to videogame consoles, laptop computers, and cellphones. Coltan is often spirited out of the DRC to US, Swiss, Belgian and German clients by Ugandan and Rwandan army officers, rebel groups, and through a network of criminal syndicates. In all, 85 companies were implicated in the report (OECD Watch, 2004).

In summation, the deliberate failure of the countries of these companies to initiate criminal proceedings is enough to explain the concept of double standards.

What Could be the Reason(s) for the Double Standards

In the opinion of this paper, the protection of vested interests is behind the concept of double standards. For example, the failure of the Swiss Government to initiate criminal proceedings against Credit Suisse for ignoring the anti-money laundering rules in the acceptance of the Abacha family's $214 million deposits explains the vested interest of the Swiss Government. Moreover, the failure of the West to initiate or prosecute banks as the safe haven, and these multinational corporations suggest that those responsible are either connected to Western political elites often the shareholders and beneficiaries of the profits made by these banks and corporations or companies. If not, they would have taken penal sanction on the grounds that such behavior or action contravened their respective domestic laws. In a nutshell, the whole thing boils down to the protection of their interest at the expense of Africa.

How or what's about the Western media consistently conspicuous for showing the poverty level in Africa but refusing to show the role played by Western institutions as mentioned in this article? Aren't their conspicuous silence reveal double standards as well? Adusei (2015) responds that worth consideration provides significant insight. He opined that most Western media outlets survive through advertisements from mega businesses and multinational corporations; so, the fear of losing revenue has been behind their conspicuous silence. Adusei (2015) further argued that Western media fail to tell the world that the looted funds that make Africans poor are sitting in Europe, America, Australia, New Zealand, and other offshore Islands controlled by the West ironically on record for sanctioning corrupt African leaders. From Adusei's assertion confirmed by the noticeable silence of Western media, it can be inferred that they too are aiding corruption in Africa.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the West double standards in the fight against widespread corruption in Africa. From the deliberation or arguments proffered, this paper concludes on the following which could be synonymous to the findings of the paper.

The inclination of the West to help fight corruption in Africa through sanctions has been hypocritical. As mentioned in this paper, the pieces of evidence have established the West complicity in Widespread corruption that entrenched extreme poverty in Africa. In other words, the West has been an active partner or facilitator in perpetuating corruption that entrenched extreme poverty in Africa. As such, the West remains guilty just as those corrupt African leaders mentioned in this paper.

On side of the Western media, it is common to see poverty-stricken Africans in poor living conditions in Western documentaries, but the same documentaries are always silent on the role played by Western institutions that significantly aided in the tens of billions of dollars that left the shores of Africa.

Finally, the paper concludes that Africa reliance on the West to help fight against widespread corruption responsible for abject poverty must be not only be an illusion but viewed with serious skepticism. This is because the West is pretending to be in the interest of the poverty-stricken Africans.

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ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS |Volume VII Issue IX September 2023

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