

# The Challenges of Fighting Corruption in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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## Abstract

*The phenomenon of corruption is not peculiar to Nigeria but what is worrisome is the extent of its prevalence in the country. Nigeria has been ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world on several occasions by Transparency International (TI). The collateral damages of corruption cannot be quantified as its effects on Nigeria's socio-economic and political life has become a source of concern. In view of the above, this paper attempts to examine corruption as an intervening variable between politics and the economy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic with a view to understanding the continuous growth and effects of corruption in the face of several efforts to stemming the tides. Methodologically, the study relied largely on secondary data and the use of descriptive method for its analysis. This study found out that there exist an inseparable relationship between Nigerian political elites, corruption and the nature of post-colonial state. The paper submits that the post-independent Nigeria generally and Fourth Republic in particular on one hand has continually served as prebendal avenue for privatizing public funds and resources while on the other hand remained as protection against punishments for offenders. This has made it difficult for effective fight against corruption. The paper is of the view that tackling corruption requires multidimensional and holistic approaches which include prevention, sustained political will, strengthening of governmental institutions, tightening the noose of anti-corruption laws and enforcement of such laws. It therefore concludes that corruption in Nigeria can be likened to cancer defiant of several concerted efforts; solutions should not stir despair and despondence as all hands need to be on deck to tackle the menace.*

**Keywords:** Corruption, Transparency International, political elite, public fund, post-colonial state

## Introduction

That Nigeria is corrupt is no longer in doubt. For example, the former president of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo has on different occasions expressed his views about the degree and the extent to which Nigerians can go to have their bidding actualized even if such an action is inimical to the interest of the generality of Nigerians. In the same vein, President Muhammadu Buhari remarked that "if we don't kill corruption, corruption will kill Nigeria". This has also been reiterated recently by Professor Wole Soyinka. Corroborating these, several surveys carried out over a period of years presented a pathetic state of the rate or incidences of corruption in the country. Up till 2007, she has continued to hover around in the list

of the top ten leading countries on corruption. The Corruption Perceptions Index 2013 released by the Transparency International shows that Nigeria ranks 31 among the most corrupt nations (Onuigbo, 2015). The United Nations Human Development Index ranked Nigeria 159 out of the 172 countries polled in 2012 (Olatunji, Fagbamila & Lawal, 2014).

Without gainsaying, corruption is an infectious virus which has infected all countries of the world. Put differently, no country can claim to be immune from corrupt activities. In the words of Ajibewa (2006) “corruption knows no frontiers” and it is not a malady unique to African states as earlier held. What draws the difference are the capacity of the state to tame its spread and the degree and volume of its incidence. This draws the line between the developing and developed countries. Thus, while the incidence of corruption is on the increase in developing countries, the more advanced economies have been able to develop mechanisms to curtail and tackle the scourge.

It has been observed that unbridled corruption and mismanagement had swallowed about 40 percent of Nigeria's \$20 billion annual oil income (Ribadu 2004). About \$380-\$400 billion was believed to have been stolen from the treasury by Nigeria's leaders between 1960 and 1999 (Ajodo-Adebanjoko & Okorie, 2014; Ogundiya, 2010). Reasonably, the collateral damages of corruption cannot be quantified as what is given as figures is just an 'estimate' created from the fact. This conclusion is derived partly from the fact that corruption is generally illegal, tends to be hidden and, the result of modern cross-national empirical literature reveals difficulty of measurement (Glaeser & Goldin, 2006).

Questions begging for answers are; what may be wrong with Nigeria? Why the rising tide of poverty and hunger in the midst of plenty? What accounted for decaying public utilities and infrastructures, social tensions and suspicion, armed robberies, kidnappings, political violence and turmoil, incidences of threat to Nigeria's unity, institutional arrangement ineffectiveness, loss of public trust in governance et cetera despite her rich human, resource endowments and enormous revenue generation capacity from oil and non-oil sectors. Why is corruption defying solutions despite several efforts to nip it in the bud? The readymade and immediate answer to these varied questions is an acknowledgement of the pervasive nature of corruption which has eaten deep into every facets of Nigerian life.

Three key variables are relevant for this analysis. These are; the structures (resource endowments), institutions (that is, laws and regulations, as well as informal rules, such as social obligations and how public sector is organized), and actors (for instance, individuals, political parties, pressure groups, the military, business associations, external stakeholders, such as donor agencies, foreign investors) (Fritz, Kaiser & Levy; 2009).

From the foregoing this paper seeks to take a cursory look at corruption ridden Nigeria in terms of political and economic process in the Fourth republic. Also the paper tries to account for continuous growth of

corruption in the polity despite several efforts made at stemming the tides. Resulting from these endeavours, we assess obstacles in the fight against corruption and suggest mechanisms to curtail the scourge.

## **Conceptual and Theoretical Clarifications**

### **Corruption**

Corruption has been a subject of immeasurable and diverse interpretations by scholars over the years. Scholars according to Ajibewa (2006) are still searching for a unified theory on corruption.

Notwithstanding the varied interpretations, it is necessary to define and explain it as it is used in this paper. The all-day descriptions of corruption are; pay-off, egunje, chuachua, settlement, season's greetings, palm greasing, bribery, kickbacks, family support, cronyism, favouritism, patronage, extortion, influence peddling, fraud and embezzlement (Audu, 2008; Obayelu, 2007; Folarin, 2014; Ajodo-Adebanjoko & Okorie, 2014). It also carries such connotations as, political, private, bureaucratic, economic, political, religious, moral, professional, organized corruption, working class corruption, petty, grand corruption and so on (Ajodo-Adebanjoko & Okorie, 2014; Folarin, 2014; Ogundiya; 2010).

To Osoba, (1998) corruption is an “anti-social behaviour conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which undermines the authorities' capacity to serve the welfare of all citizens”. Nkom (1986) sees it as “the perversion of public office for private advantage”. He stated further that bribery and or other forms of unauthorized reward used to influence people in position of authority for undue private gain, nepotism or granting of pecuniary advantage to ones close friend, kinship relations and ethnic associates constitute an improper act and is against public interest. Otite (1986) defines it as “the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favour, or moral depravity”. He added that “corruption involves the injection of additional but improper transactions aimed at changing the normal course of events and altering judgments and positions of trust”. Lipset and Lenz (2000) describe it as an “effort to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gain at public expense” (Fagbadebo, 2007). Whichever way, it is defined, corruption is a debasement of integrity, an act for selfish advantage, improper conduct which impedes general good and play the role of a vehicle for societal destruction. Similarly, Ayegi (2003) pointed that corruption is an anti-social and self-centered activity detrimental to societal interests (Audu, 2008). Bala Usman opines that corruption is a violation of laws, rules, regulations and procedures, and ethical standards, by which public officers are expected to conduct themselves, in order to acquire money, goods, services, positions and privileges, for them, and for others. For the purpose of this paper corruption is: seen as the utilization of official positions or titles for personal or private gain either on an individual or collective basis at the expense of the public good in violation of established rules and ethical considerations and through the direct or indirect participation of one or more public officials whether they be politicians or bureaucrats (Hope, 2000).

From the foregoing corruption in Nigeria has a bearing on the emergence, development and conception of the post-colonial state by the Nigerian elite. The new Nigerian elite which took over power from the departing colonial authorities also took over from them the development ethos of the colonial

administrations. This could be stated as the self-interested exploitation of the people and the country. The self-serving ethos which had been the foundation the colonial state had engrained in the mentality of the emerging Nigerian elite. Consequently, the group remains just like its colonial progenitor an instrument of exploitation and suppression of the popular classes and a tool for primitive accumulation and class consolidation for the hegemonic groups.

The post-colonial state is not too different from its colonial forebears because according to Ake (1981), it remains a statist economy. The state has the tendency to use political power for private accumulation.

Therefore, the political elites seek to control the political power in order to increase their material base. Political power is holistic in the sense that it does not only ensure access to wealth through primitive accumulation of common wealth by corrupt political elites but also serve as security and protection. Little wonder the elite that were suspects in such corruption cases would never be thoroughly investigated or prosecuted and are hardly ever convicted of any offence. Whenever some feeble convictions are orchestrated, the accused elites are subsequently released in plea-bargain and/or presidential pardon.

### **Historical Perspectives of Corruption in Nigeria**

Corruption is a multidimensional and epochal as it is found in every sphere and stages of a society's political and economic developments. This proposition agrees with Karl Marx exposition of historical and dialectical materialism in the explanation of societal developments.

Nigeria's pre-colonial economy was dependent on subsistence agricultural activities for survival. This was aided by peasant proprietorship and fairly easy access to the use of land with some form of hierarchical control of ownership of the land. During this period, the popular opinion was that the land and all the natural endowments on its surface belong to the king. This notion aided the dominance of the aristocrats and people of noble status who extracted surpluses from the masses in particular and the community in general. As it was noted by Olufemi (2005), the social and cultural limitations are internally induced factors that aided royalty's cause. In other words, these factors ensure king and heir apparent domination and exploitation. The advent of foreign incursion and externally induced actions brought about fundamental changes in the local economy. Thus, Colonial rule super-imposed legal and political ideas subordinated the traditional institutions to the whims and caprices of the white officials and formally incorporated the local economy into the capitalism mode of production (Olufemi, 2005). There was also the 'divide and rule' tactics along sectional and class lines. These unwholesome social exchange and interactions pervaded the Nigerian state till October, 1960.

The hope of Nigerians for a better future faded within a short period of time, as events unfolding after independence presented a picture of a colonial subjugation in a new and refined dimensions. Ojukwu and Shopeju (2010) argue that one of the main factors militating against the socio-economic and political

development of Nigerian state since independence is elite corruption which is arguably seeing one of the inherited colonial practices and ethos. The leadership do not only control and dominate economy they also exercise legal monopoly over the structures and institutions of the political and economic processes which shape the ideological and philosophical direction of the Nigerian state. Nothing significant was done to checkmate and contain the impediments to a better and prosperous political and economic environment. It was not surprising that the January, 1966 coup plotters, cited corruption in high places as one of the reasons for the coup.

The Gowon regime which took over in July, 1966 was enmeshed in corruption as the period witnessed the reign of super-Permanent Secretaries who were overseeing the post-civil war Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation programmes in the award of juicy contracts. Added to this was the corruption scandal involving the Ministry of Defense and Central Bank of Nigeria officials on the importation of cement (Ibiloye, 2014)? In 1978, about 2.8 billion naira was allegedly declared missing from the state treasury (Folarin, 2014)

It was the same story during Alhaji Shehu Shagari administration (1979-1983) and by the end of the tenure; the administration had incurred a debt of over 10 billion naira (see Ojukwu and Shopeju, 2010 for details). Evidences abound of unbridled corruption and uncontrolled inflation between 1979 and 1983 resulting from the excessive liberal import policy. With the policy, import licenses were indiscriminately given to members of the ruling party and were also used to lure opposition party members into the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). This scenario is still alive till today and has been the major reason for cross-carpeting and shifting of camps across party lines since the return of democracy in 1999. The notion is that special benefit awaits members of the ruling party.

As Adeyi (2006) pointed out, when General Muhammadu Buhari took over power from Shehu Shagari administration, one major step he took was to establish a case of misuse of public funds. Politicians found guilty were sentenced to various jail terms by the military tribunals constituted to try them for crimes ranging from financial impropriety, embezzlement, misappropriation, misapplication into looting of public treasury.

The scope of corruption in Nigeria has expanded significantly since the administrations of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. For some scholars corruption in Nigeria has moved from prebendalism to predation in which office holders and public officials try to repay their supporters, family members, cronies, ethnic group members etc. with sums of money, contracts or jobs (Lewis, cited in Obuah, 2010).

On 30 June, 1991, William Keeling, a Financial Times journalist, was deported from Nigeria by the Babangida regime for investigating and reporting about the \$12.4 billion Gulf war oil windfall which the then military junta could not account for. This is why during his regime Babangida was regarded as the

most corrupt ruler in Africa (Sodaro, 2008). Though, the report was not made public, the Pius Okigbo panel constituted by General Abacha confirmed that the windfall was expended on unproductive ventures or misappropriated. No justification was given to explain the reason for the depletion of the account to \$206m (Ibiloye, 2014). Even the late Dictator, General Sani Abacha, his family and cronies, were economic predators and ended up ruining the Nation's economy through unfettered looting of the public treasury which has no equal in the annals of Nigeria's history (Akindele, 2005). Part of the money stashed away in foreign banks by Abacha has been recovered by the governments through anti-corruption efforts. This may not have been possible if not for Abacha's death.

### **Corruption in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

The post-independence leadership of Nigeria turn politics to a zero-sum game in which politics becomes anything goes contest. The centre (control of the state apparatus) was considered as the centre for aggrandizement either for self, caucus and/or group/sectional interests. In Nigeria, the state, (to a vast majority) is a readymade instrument of primitive accumulation for personal, sectional or religious, political and economic interests. The state therefore became a rentier and prebendal entity and regarded as a "predatory state" (Ale, 2010).

The notion that experience is a lesson tends to be contradicted since Nigeria return to democratic rule in 1999. The veracity of this assertion lies in the progressive level of corruption being witnessed in the past 17 years. Owasa (2008) shares this sentiment. Despite the anti-corruption fight of the President Obasanjo's administration that began in 1999, the administration has recorded high-level corruption. For example President Olusegun Obasanjo was in-charge of the Petroleum ministry where over \$400 million invested on the Turn-Around Maintenance (TAM) and repairs of the refineries failed to yield any positive result, and the contractors who handled the projects were never brought to book. More so, the report by the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) indicated that 445,000 barrels of crude oil sold by the NNPC between January and July 2002 was not accounted for and that within the period there was a shortfall of N302billion as undeclared revenue. The then Chairman of RMAFC, Haman Tukur, frantic efforts to the Presidency to compel, Jackson Gaius-Obaseki, the then Group Managing Director of NNPC, to refund the remaining money into government's coffer was never heeded. In addition, the joint panel of the National Assembly set up to probe the matter was encumbered by the Presidency and the People Democratic Party on the ground of negative signals such a probe would have on Nigeria's external image, given Presidency direct overseeing of the petroleum ministry. The National Identity Card scandal was one of such cases of high profile corruption perpetrated by the top public office holders. In 2001, a contract of \$214 million for the National Identity Card project was awarded to SAGEM S.A. a French company, without giving consideration to Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company (NSPMC), which bid for the same contract at a lower rate (Ogbeidi, 2012). Not less than seven Nigerians were indicted for their inglorious role in that contract scam namely Hussaini Akwanga, who until December 4, 2003 was Nigeria's Minister for Labour and Productivity,

Chief Sunday Michael Afolabi and Mahmud Shata, former Minister of Internal Affairs and Minister of State in the same Ministry respectively. Others are, R. O. Akerele, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Okwesilieze Nwodo, Niyi Adelagun, a business partner of SAGEM S.A. in Nigeria and Jean-Pierre Delarue, the Regional Area Manager, Identification Systems of SAGEM S.A. (Ogbeidi, 2012).

In July, 2007, Orji Uzor Kalu, the governor of Abia State, (1999 -2007) was charged to court by the EFCC for money laundering and mismanagement of N5 billion belonging to the people of Abia State. He was alleged to have transferred N887 million to Slok Nigeria Limited, a company owned by him. In the same month Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani, the governor of Enugu State (1999-2007), was also arraigned on a 105 count charge of stealing N5.6 billion belonging to the state. Initially, Nnamani fled the country but returned to take up his seat in the senate where he served for four years. Alhaji Ibrahim SaminuTuraki (Jigawa State Governor, 1999-2007) was arraigned by the EFCC on a 32 charge of stealing N36 billion. He was also a Senator between 2007 and 2011. The former governor of Taraba State Rev. Jolly Tanko Nyame's (1999-2007) case was intriguing, as he was alleged to have stolen over N5.5 billion of the state's fund in a day. In March 2007 Governor, Peter Odili's case took a dramatic dimension when he obtained a curious Federal High Court decision forbidding the EFCC from investigating the finances of his government and eventually secured a perpetual injunction restraining the EFCC from arresting, detaining and arraigning him on the basis of his tenure as governor of Rivers state (Brimah, Bolaji& Ibikunle; 2013). This injunction still subsists almost 10 years after it was granted. In 2011, three former governors were charged to court by the EFCC for engaging in fraudulent activities and diversion of billions of naira belonging to their respective states while in office. The trio were Gbenga Daniel, (Ogun State) N58 billion, Adebayo Alao Akala, (Oyo State) N25 billion and Aliyu Akwe Doma, (Nasarawa State) N18 billion (Brimah, Bolaji & Ibikunle; 2013).

**The 7<sup>th</sup> National Assembly has had its lows especially in terms of its cover up and lack of will power to resolve some allegations and cases of corrupt practices and official misconducts occasioned during Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's administration. A number of these scandals have been notable. They include Abdulrasheed Maina pension scam of about N195 Billion, Kerosene subsidy scam, police pension fund fraud worth N32.8 Billion, Malabu oil scandal, (Premium Times, 2015). Some of these cases have been swept under the carpet; others have suffered claims of oblivion.** Impropropriety, scandal and counter allegations in the National Assembly include, but not limited to these are petroleum subsidy probe saga involving a former member of the House of Representatives, Hon. Faruk

Lawan and the CEO of Capital Oil Femi Otedola. The Power sector probe is notable with the involvement of Senator Nicholas Yahaya Ugbanne and Honourable Ndidi Elumelu who were both chairmen of Senate and House Committees on Power.

Stella Oduah, former Aviation minister used the ministry's finance to buy bullet proof cars for her personal use was elected as a Senator in the 2015 election. The immediate past minister of Petroleum Resources Mrs. Diezani Allison Madueke has been accused of stealing a whopping sum of \$9.3 Billion (Uwak and Udofia, 2016). The alleged non remittance of **\$20 Billion into the federation account by the NNPC could not be resolved till the end of Jonathan administration. This accusation became a public knowledge because President Jonathan's inability to act on the allegation leveled against the NNPC by the then Governor of the Central Bank**, Public officials; including the president, vice president, governors, deputy governors, ministers, members of the States legislators, head of military and other paramilitary outfits share in one corruption allegation or the other. Former President, Olusegun Obasanjo was alleged to have used his office to solicit for fund through fund raising for Obasanjo Presidential Library in Ota. The ex-Vice president, Atiku Abubakar was also linked to some shady deals using his position to facilitate release of funds from PTDF account in questionable manners to cronies and business allies.

### Challenges of Tackling Corruption in Nigeria

Numerous are the obstacles confronting our nation toward eradicating, preventing or at least reducing the extent of corruption in our society. The challenges that confront us include, though not limited to these interlinked factors: elite conception of post-colonial state, lack of political will, poverty and social inequality, social diversity, poor remuneration of public servants, lack of transparency and accountability in office and so on.

Class analysis of corruption indicts the elites who tend to have access to state resources and also use the resources for private gains. As Marxists observe, the state being the instrument of the elites tends to work for the interests of the elites. Therefore how can government be the vanguard of fighting corruption when at the same time the state continues to serve as protection for corrupt political elite in the society? This is why lip services have always been played with the fight against corruption because some allegations of corrupt practices are either not investigated at all or haphazardly prosecuted with few or no conviction made. The Immunity clause of section 308 (1) jealously guarded over the years to protect the presidents, vice presidents, governors and deputy governors is evidently clear the utilization of the machinery of the state to serve the interests of the Nigerian elites. As observed by Obuah (2010) noting that the claim of immunity is absurd because it is not the intention of the framers of the constitution to allow the elected officials to steal and plunder the nation's wealth. Reinforcing this was the way and manner in which attempt to remove immunity was defeated in the last constitutional amendment, as impunity soars by those it covers. Even those who tend to be unfortunately convicted are "sacrificial lambs" to mask the contradiction of the postcolonial state as a source of primitive accumulation and also protection for corrupt individuals to give impression and convince people of the war against corruption are given light jail sentences like Lucky Igbinedion while some big guns after serving jail sentences are granted state pardon. Salisu Buhari, the first Speaker of the House of Representatives after the return of democracy in 1999 was



granted state pardon a year after he was convicted and fined N2, 500 equivalents to \$20 for falsifying his age and academic certificate. The Late D.S.P Alamiyesegeha provides another typical example of presidential pardon for corrupt action. The Plea bargaining was seen by some people as a ploy to circumvent the weight of war against corruption and give a soft landing to highly corrupt influential individuals. Largely it is common not to hear the last of some long cases of corruption in Nigeria as some high profile cases are swept under the carpet.

The lack of political will is also connected to conception of state. As subsequent governments anti-corruption stance were characterized by inertia and passivity. This is why the body language abhors or encourages corruption. Some policies and laws formulated to tackle corruption and other related crimes seem not live up to their billings. Ajibewa observes lack of operational capability of laws to be brought against the reason for their formulation. He noted that the enactment of the Corruption Practices Act lacked retroactive power to prosecute corrupt offenders prior to June 13, 2000, the law came into force.

It is a Hausa parlance that says *"In aka gannabera, nadaddawafa?"* meaning *if you accuse a mouse, what about the locust beans*. This saying queries the class relations that exist in Nigeria between the masses and the elite as regard corruption. While the majority of the masses are being pauperized by the activities of corrupt elites, various divisive methods such as religion, ethnic regional and party divides have come to be used as cover for their misdeeds when they are asked to account for their stewardship. The immediate gratifications the masses get coupled with false consciousness tend to arouse some sense of solidarity and support as well as the elite serves as their source of inspiration and aspiration.

One of the most noticeable challenges to tackling corruption in Nigeria is corruption itself. Corruption is not easily conquered or defeated because of its stiff resistance in what is being referred to as "corruption fighting back". Its fighting back takes methods which may include; the use of self-pity, inundation of 'witch-hunting', slowing down of legal processes, inducement of anti-corruption officials, claims of fundamental rights and reference to unprosecuted past corrupt cases and spread of false allegations.

One fundamental cause of corruption can also be located within the labyrinth of economics. It has been observed by scholars that corruption and poverty go together. This can be depicted in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) where wealth is correlated with corruption. Here it generally shows that the wealthier a country, the less corrupt that country is (Roskin et al, 2012). Most poor countries have shown high level of corruption. Although poverty cannot be eradicated but it can be mitigated in order to prevent individuals in an open social mobility from embezzling and stealing public funds when they get the opportunities.

Institutional weaknesses can also be identified as a big challenge to tackling corruption in Nigeria. These weaknesses are found in most of the governmental institutions such as executive, legislature, judiciary and other notable governmental agencies saddled with the responsibilities of fighting against corruption

and indiscipline, like the EFCC, ICPC, Code of Conduct Bureau and so forth. For example, instead of the executive arm of being a co-equal of other branches within the context of principles of separation of powers it has maintained relative preponderance and control over the National Assembly and the Judiciary. Moreover Nigerian executives are absolutely dominated by the President or the Governors as the case may be with overwhelming powers to personalize public offices and use them for self-aggrandizement as well as inducing other arms of government especially the legislature.

The Nigerian legislatures or the National and State Assemblies are relatively weaker to their executive counterparts especially at state levels. The legislative weakness can be understood from the perspective of executive-legislative relations which include medley into the internal affairs of the National or/and State Assemblies by their executives. Also the Nigerian legislatures are undermined by the mosaic and incessant high level of corruption that engulfed the various chambers making it impossible for them to oversight some cases of abuse of power and corruption at the executive realms. Even sometimes when some legislatures try to perform their constitutional responsibilities they tend to collude with executive to perpetrate corrupt activities such as taking bribes to approve appropriation, budgetary allocations and oversight of the government ministries, agencies and parastatals. Some cases of this nature have earlier been alluded to.

Unnecessary interference in the judicial process is evident. The case of Justice Ayo Salami and others are still fresh in our minds. Inadequate courts and judicial personnel couple with manual recording system are impediments in the judicial process. The egregious bribery and corruption that embroil the judiciary tend to weaken the courts as the last hope of the masses to effectively prosecute and punish corrupt officials. The role of unscrupulous defense counsels also hinders speedy trials. This comes informs of stay of proceedings and several adjournment to frustrate the trial of their clients. Aside the major institutions of the state, other established agencies in the fight against corruption such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC), Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) and others have been observed to be weak and lack independence. Scholars have observed that the EFCC since its inception in 2003 has played a significant role in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. While examining the role of the EFCC, its operations over the years have being termed selective and geared towards witch-hunting of adversaries and political opponents of the ruling parties.

The acting Chairman of the EFCC stated that, it is impossible to cover the entire country (with vast material and human resources and a population of about 170 Million, with 36 states, a Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and 774 Local Government Areas; including the Area Councils) without having offices in each of the states of the federation and that presently the Commission can only boast of six offices and a total of 2,173 staff including some of the officials on secondment for its operations (Ibrahim Magu, 2016). Finally, the EFCC faces the challenge of the inadequacy of the existing procedural laws, which questions the

evidential status, and admissibility of computer and electronically generated documentation (Ribadu cited in Obuah, 2010).

### **Way Forward**

In order to proffer solutions to the pandemic corruption in Nigeria will require a holistic and all-encompassing approach. As Nigerian approaches towards fighting corruption has always been unilateral and remedial as tackling corruption requires multidimensional, holistic and interrelated approaches because unilateral solutions will be ineffective and unsustainable.

Therefore, the first measure is prevention. The task should be preventive instead of curative. This requires understanding those predisposing factors that lead to corrupt practices and factors that sustain the vice of avarice and their seeming defiance to remedies and tackle them headlong. In view of this, there is need to narrow the widening gap between the rich and the poor. This has been made possible by the post-colonial state of Nigeria conceived as instrument of primitive accumulation and fostered corruption over the years.

The post-colonial conception of the state as an avenue for private accumulation of wealth has to be deconstructed. This can be done through tightening the noose of our laws that tend to give safe havens to criminals in our society. Such laws as plea bargaining has to be repealed therefore, strict adherence to the rule of law. This, it is believed can be made possible through “visionary; accountable; and reconciliatory philosophy; encouragement of free expression; non-dissembled or feigned democracy; committed actions against autocracy and injustice; honesty of political actions; followership's resistance of corruption and/or its temptations by learning to say no to corrupt leaders(hip)” (Akindele, 2005).

There is need for prompt payment of workers' salaries. The idea of delayed payment of pension, gratuities and other emoluments would serve as hindrance to a successful campaign against corruption. It is recommended that the take-home pay should, to some reasonable extent, care take of a worker's needs. The prevailing economic situation should be used to determine workers' salaries and other entitlements.

It is suggested that strengthening the formal and informal institutions of the state is a critical step to defy time and ensure steady and sustained fight against corruption and possibly prevent it. Having this in place, would help to ensure that bodies such as the legislature, the judiciary, the executive and other governmental agencies perform their constitutional responsibilities without hindrance with an intent to safeguarding mechanisms that will ensure loopholes. An added advantage is that it will give a picture of an all inclusive fight against corruption built on justice, equality and fairness. This guarantees the success of war against corruption. The unwholesome role of the state officials is an encumbrance to the success of successive governments' ability to address this scourge.

While we may agree with Akindele (2005) and others that corruption can be tackled through development paradigm and democratic system anchored on accountable leadership with attributes of hard-work,

responsiveness and sincerity, we disagree with the notion of unimpeachable because this negate one of the mechanisms of separation of powers and checks and balances in a democratic system. Instead of making leaders unimpeachable there must be strict adherence to the process of impeachment to guard against abuse rather than having outright abuse of power and corruption always perpetrated by our leaders.

Politically, there has to be sustained political will to tackle the scourge of corruption in Nigeria. Relatively, we are seeing the Buhari administration's commitment to fighting corruption than its predecessors. Though, the Treasury Single Account (TSA) was an initiative of the Jonathan administration, the implementation of the TSA has helped to block leakages and subtly prevent corruption; billions of naira were said to have been saved from this exercise. The prevalence of MDA having multiple accounts is a practice in several developing and low-income countries with fragmented government banking structure that discourage effective management and control over cash balances. One is tempted to agree with Pattenayak and Fainboim, (2016) that TSA is an innovation towards effective aggregate control and management over government cash balances

The various anti-corruption laws must be tightened and enforced. Effective or commensurate punishment should be meted out to officials found wanting/culpable in order to serve as deterrence to others. While such legislations that directly or indirectly oils corruption must be abrogated. For example plea bargaining, we submit should not have a place in our laws as it has been tended to abuse (the cases of Lucky Igbinedion and Cecilia Ibru are signal to abuse). It may have worked elsewhere; its workability/effectiveness on the Nigerian shore is in doubt.

At the same time reward system must be institutionalized at all levels of government by applauding and giving merit awards on a regular basis to encourage members of the society that abhor corrupt practices and other ignoble character through track records of honesty, hard-work, dedication, high ethical behaviour and so on.

Similarly, while the passing of the freedom of information act is a right step in right direction in order to ensure transparency and accountability in public office, it can only be crystallized if and when the implementation of the law takes its full effect because we are yet to see public information being free to access. This can also be attested to here a few month ago when the management of the Federal University Lokoja was desirous to have the staff to sign some sort of "Oath of Secrecy" that was vehemently resisted by the academics. Should the move succeeds it could have stifled academic freedom and reverse progress made to this day in this direction.

Therefore the use of both carrot and stick will be simultaneously tenable to include non-confrontational as recommended by Transparency International (TI) and aggressive and combatant when need be in order to achieve the objective of rooting out corruption.

There is need for behavioural change and value reorientation to deconstruct the endemic culture of corruption in Nigeria. This must include on one hand top-bottom approach. Elites at the top of the social ladder serve as source of inspiration and aspiration for the masses and given this, the country needs such exemplary leadership who will display a high level of public accountability, transparency, discipline, incorruptness and so on while on the other hand the bottom-top approach requires effective socialization involving the agents; family, schools (from primary to tertiary and other non-formal ones) religious institutions (mosques and churches), the media (both visual, electronic and print) have to perform traditional functions of upholding high ethical value system to be passed from one generation to another in order have morally upright, honest, law abiding, hard-working and patriotic Nigerians that transcend time.

There has to be mass realization and objective consciousness on the general impact of corruption on the society in order to secure mass support for fight against the scourge so that people are not easily manipulated by political elite to undermine anti-corruption efforts. This can be done through concerted efforts by all and sundry to always expose, demonize and show effects of corruption on socio-political development of Nigeria.

The Nigerian political scene which always been seen as dirty has to be cleansed in order to infuse honest and conscientious individuals at the helm of affairs presently dominated by unscrupulous persons. As the saying goes that "the refusal of the good to rule is that he/she is going to be ruled by his/her inferior". Therefore, there is need to comb and purge the political scenes of some *legis Looters and execu Thieves*.

## Conclusions

The essence of the state in any society/polity is to ensure an improved socio-economic wellbeing of the inhabitants of her geographical area. Since government symbolizes the state and governance is embedded in the state, it (government) is expected to ensure the provision of the peoples basic needs so as to avoid a state of anarchy, solitary and nasty life. The truism that corruption impedes development in any part of the world needs no contention. Though, this assertion is being contested by Nye, 1967; Leff, 1964; Oskar Kurer 2001; and others who opined that corruption could facilitate economic growth and development. The accruable benefits of corruption as it has been observed in Thailand and Italy, Russia and America is a contradiction in sub-Saharan African states" where corruption has reduced government's ability to maintain public infrastructure and education services, and pay the wages of the public service. The enormous costs to private enterprise imposed by such a 'state collapse' are by themselves sufficient to impede significant economic development" (Kurer, 2001). Paradoxically everyone is culpable because directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously we are caught in the web of corruption. As a canker worm, infectiously likened to Ebola and defiant of several concerted efforts, solutions should not stir despair and despondence. Therefore all hands should be on deck to get rid of the scourge and ensure the country realizes its full potentials.

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